

Super Bowl XXVIII: Aikman vs. Montana

INSIDE

SPORTS

September 1993

NFL
Preview
Issue

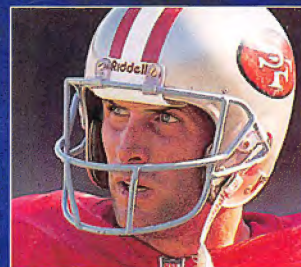
1993 NFL PREVIEW

*Super Bowl MVP
Troy Aikman has moved
to the front of the pack
of NFL passers*

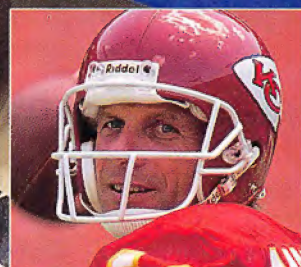
■ The Cowboys
will stop Joe
Montana's Super
Bowl winning
streak at four

■ Why the
Heisman Trophy
is a joke

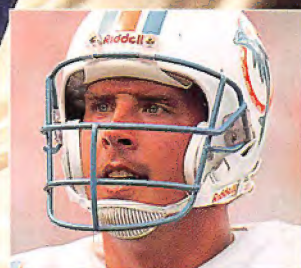
PLUS: Mike Ditka,
Derrick Thomas,
Warren Moon



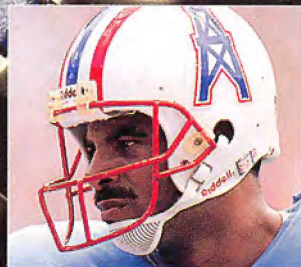
STEVE YOUNG



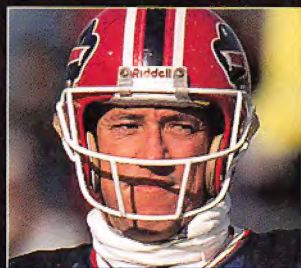
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DAN MARINO



WARREN MOON



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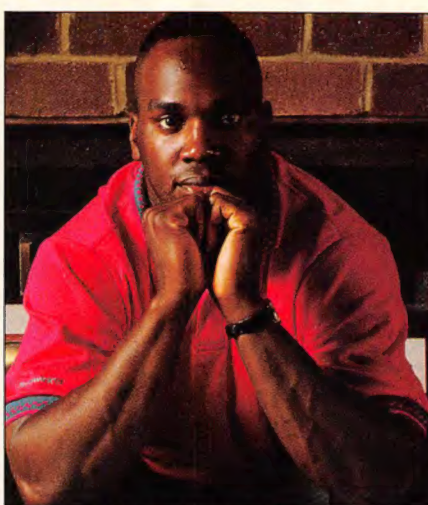
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 By ED WERDER

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■ **NFC Central:** The arrival of Reggie White, the Minister of Defense, has the Pack's divisional rivals saying their prayers

■ **NFC West:** The 49ers have been losing the big ones, and that's one habit they want to break right now

■ **AFC East:** Buffalo's still the division's best team, but the Bills needn't worry about another Super Bowl

■ **AFC Central:** The Oilers have all the talent they need, but they must get the job done—before it's too late

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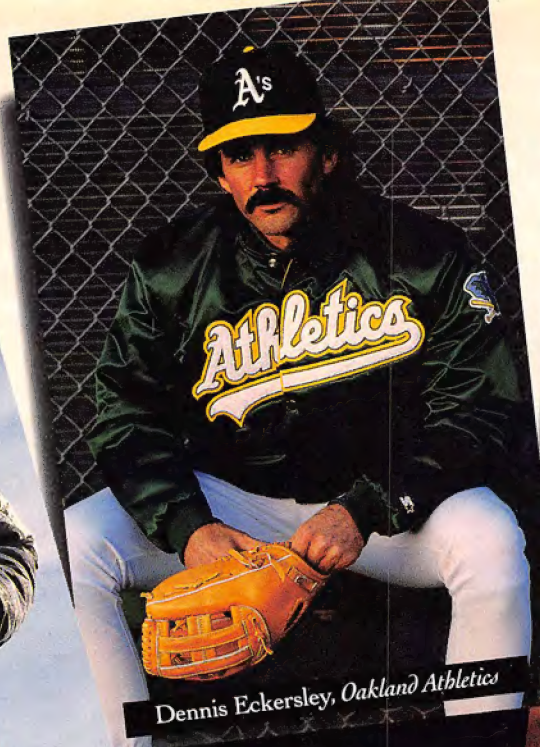
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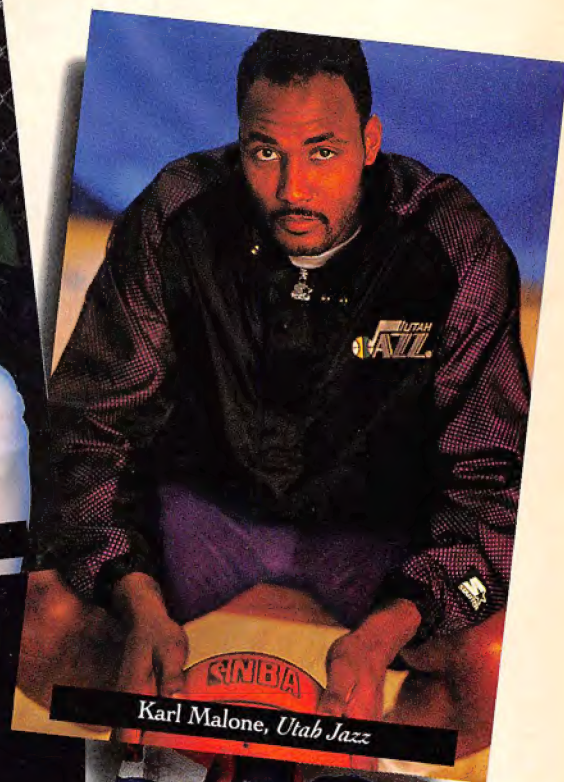
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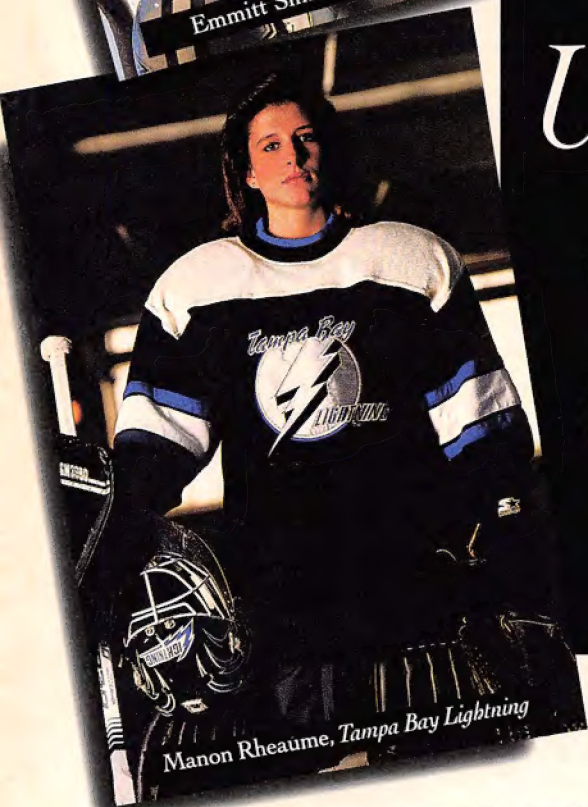
Emmitt Smith, Dallas Cowboys



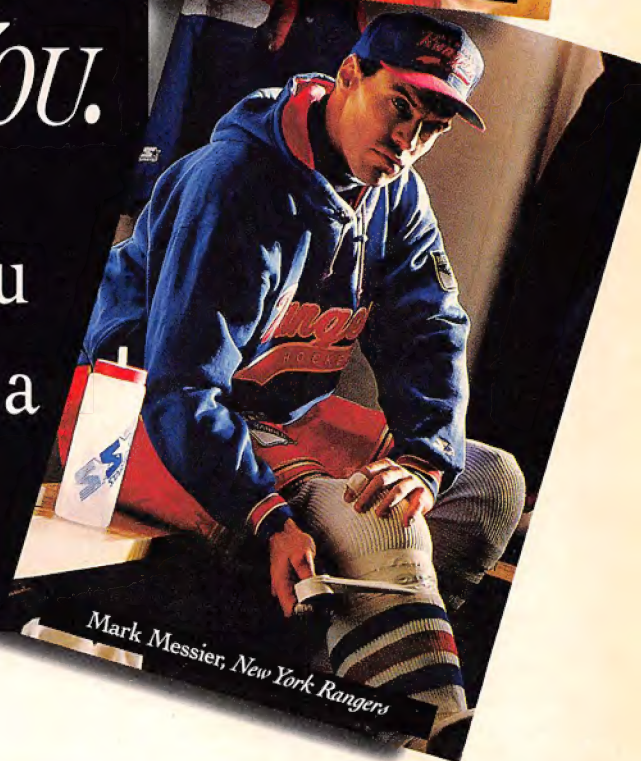
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EDITOR'S NOTE

WHEN LAST SEEN, WARREN Moon was walking out of Buffalo's Rich Stadium a beaten man, having been on the losing end of the biggest collapse in the history of the NFL. The Houston Oilers ran out to a 28-3 half-time lead against the Bills in an AFC wild-card game, thanks to four Moon touchdown passes, then extended the margin to 35-3 early in the second half—before the Houston secondary inexplicably forgot how to cover receivers. Result: a 41-38 Buffalo win, which represents the biggest comeback in league history. It also meant more misery in the life of Houston's veteran quarterback. Moon's mind certainly had to flash back to the '91 playoffs, when the Oilers blew a 21-6 lead at Denver and lost to John Elway and the Broncos in the final seconds 26-24.

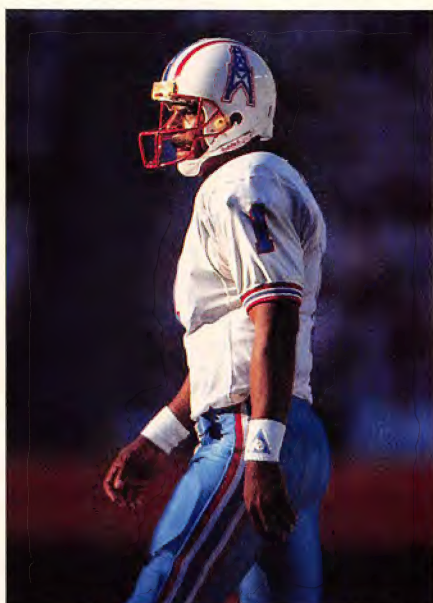
However, in Brad Buchholz's profile, which begins on page 60, you'll see that coping with tragedy and disappointment is old hat to Moon, who grew up on the hardened streets of L.A., an eyewitness to the 1965 Watts riots.

Though Moon was a star high school quarterback, no big-name school recruited him as a quarterback. He finally convinced the University of Washington to take a chance on him, but although Moon was named Pac-8 player of the year as a senior, nothing he did seemed good enough for Huskies fans, who had a hard time accepting the idea of a black quarterback and who subjected Moon to racial taunts when he struggled. Then Moon, quarterback of the Rose Bowl champions, went undrafted by the NFL and spent six years in exile in the Canadian Football League.

For quite some time, Buchholz, a senior writer for *INSIDE SPORTS*, for the past several years, had discussed with me

the idea of doing a piece on Moon—for personal as well as professional reasons.

"Warren and I have several things in common," says Buchholz, who also has written in-depth profiles on such athletes as Rod Strickland and Darren Daulton for *I.S.* "We're both the same age, we both grew up in the L.A. area, and we now live in the Houston area. It was a nice tie-in.



Win or lose, Moon exhibits nothing but class on the field.

"I remember the ['65] riots in L.A., though I saw them from a different perspective than Moon. I grew up in the San Fernando Valley, but my parents are from the Huntington Park and Compton sections of Los Angeles, which is where Warren is from. We clicked because he knew that I understood what his world was all about. I don't want it to sound like a cliché, but I was bowled over by the man's drive. He's competing in

a world inside himself that nobody else can relate to. Despite his cool exterior, there is something inside of Warren Moon that really boils."

One of those things burning inside of Moon is his desire to compete. He suffered a late-season injury in '92 that left his playoff status in question, but those close to Moon knew all along he would be ready to play against Buffalo. It's unfortunate that on the field Warren Moon is best remembered as the quarterback of a team that chokes in the playoffs. In reality, the most impressive thing about Moon is how he has handled not only the defeats on the field, but the adversity he has faced in his life.

Vince Aversano

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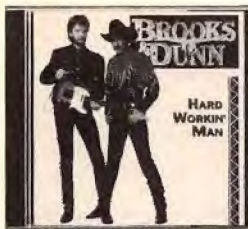
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2. *	4. *	6. *	8. *

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1. *	4. *	7. *	10. *
2. *	5. *	8. *	11. *
3. *	6. *	9. *	12. *

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13. *	14. *	15. *
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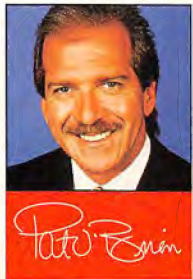
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QHJ-8F-RN-WS-EM

By PAT O'BRIEN

At Last, Second to None



SAN FRANCISCO 49ers quarterback Steve Young and I have talked about everything from Jerusalem to Merlin Olsen. We've analyzed the 49ers pass rush and the offensive line, compared last year's

squad with this year's lineup, and talked about how you keep your arm strong in the offseason. We've agreed that sometimes it's good to do absolutely nothing with your spare time, and that, in the end, hard work is the only thing that brings success.

We've talked about television, about the intricacies of Barcelona and London in August, about Bill Walsh, about the Bible. We've talked a little basketball, and we've dug deep into how different people deal with critics. Jerry Rice takes up much of our discussion, as does a bunch of young upstarts called the Dallas Cowboys. We talk about Vince Lombardi and even the Beatles. After all this, I look down at my notes (such as they are) and in the middle, I've written only one word: "Montana."

What does Young have to do to get rid of the story that won't go away? "It doesn't matter," he says with a resigned tone of voice. "Either way, I can't control it. I'll answer the questions when they're asked, but you know, Pat, it's got a life of its own now—and that's fine, too." In other words, you can do all you want in the City by the Bay, but the biggest cloud hovering over Candlestick will always be Joe Montana.

Or will it? I think about this and jot down some ways Young might change his situation. (1) Divert the press by dating Madonna. (2) Become the Giants' cleanup hitter. (3) Succeed as the Giants' cleanup hitter. (4) Change his college affiliation to Notre Dame. (5) Change Eddie DeBartolo Jr.'s to Brigham Young. (6) Quit football and open a coffee shop down South and call it L.A. Espresso. (7) Ship Joe Montana to someplace like Kansas City. (8) Win a couple of Super Bowls.

Well, at least two of them work. And since Joe's already gone to the land of

artificial turf, perhaps the artificial fans of San Francisco can begin to focus on the prize: winning those Super Bowls. Right now, their best chance is with a guy named Steve Young. You remember him—the most valuable player in the league.

"Yeah, I think we can do it," the NFL's reigning MVP says. "I don't think we played our best football last year in the championship game against Dallas, and it's been a bitter pill we've had to swallow. But we're going to have a great season. We have to. We have to reclaim our conference. We have to take it away from Dallas."

"Have to" are the key words here. In San Francisco, where they remember four Super Bowls with Montana's name written all over them—well, let's just say they're unforgiving. In short, 49ers fans will like Young when he brings them another trophy. And another. And another...

Of course, the keys to that will be not only Young, who quite frankly is capable of getting it done, but Rice, who lists Montana as one of his personal favorites. Rumors have surfaced that suggest Rice doesn't like life without Joe, that he only tolerates Steve, and that you shouldn't invite them to a buddies-only party. Is there anything to the whispers?

"Nothing," Young says. "I think I've finally shown that with me in there his productivity is at or above what it's always been. I think what Jerry wants is productivity: If he's not dominating the league, there's got to be a reason. But if he looks at the numbers, he knows and I know it's not a big deal. All the hype [about this relationship] has been flushed out."

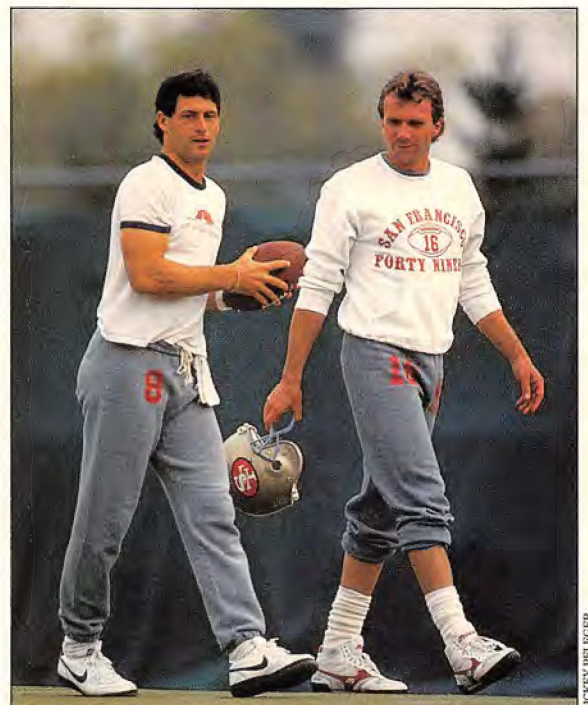
Let's pause and think about this for a moment. This is the MVP of the National Football League here, the best player in the league, answering questions about a quarterback who hasn't played but one game in two years and responding to allegations about his relationship with a wide receiver who—thanks in part to Young's strong left arm—is still an All-Pro. Young may love to run, but he still gets the ball to the right guys, and they know it. But then

again, Joe used to...and remember the time... It never stops.

"I've got a really hard shell now," Young says with a shrug. "I take things in stride more than ever. I mean, you get thick skin. Five or six years ago the littlest things would have gotten to me, but not now."

In the '60s, when the Beatles were dominating everything, I kind of felt sorry for the other groups who just couldn't quite shake playing second fiddle to them. So I go out on a limb and compare Young to the Dave Clark Five, who were No. 2 for a while behind the Beatles.

"I know what you're saying," Young says, "but that's the perception here. If I was



Young and nemesis: Shadow-boxing by the Bay.

doing this in Green Bay they would pave the streets. Since Lombardi owns Green Bay they wouldn't name the town after me, but maybe the next town over. But if you're gonna compare me to the Dave Clark Five—he's laughing now—"I'm not going to say I'm better than the Dave Clark Five. I don't care. It just doesn't bother me. In the past, it would have. Now, it's kind of fun."

That's because, with Montana gone away, Young knows he's No. 1, even though he'll always be No. 2. ■

PAT O'BRIEN's introspective looks at sports personalities appear monthly.

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Should college athletes be paid?

Yes

When Dr. Cecil Mackey was president of Michigan State University, he stated: "Something is wrong. It is obvious we are not looking to protect the student-athlete's interests. We are not looking out for the student's economic, psychological, or family interests. We are simply not addressing the realities of the world we live in. The system is so unyielding that it cannot work. Something has got to change." Even Walter Byers, who was the NCAA executive director for 36 years, admitted: "Time and circumstances have passed the entire system of intercollegiate athletics by. The management structure has become bureaucratic and unresponsive. I include the NCAA in that."

"The present scholarship compensation cap is no longer fair to the athlete and is legally indefensible. I think there's an inherent conflict that has to be resolved."

As Rick Telander of *Sports Illustrated* pointed out, "There is



DALE BROWN
has compiled a
403-233 record—
and two Final Four
trips—in his 21
years as LSU's
basketball coach.

not anything new about the unfairness and phoniness of amateurism in college sports." As far back as 1915, essayist William Foster wrote in

The Atlantic Monthly, "Only childlike innocence or willful blindness need prevent American colleges from seeing that the rules that aim to maintain athletics on what is called an 'amateur' basis, by forbidding players to receive pay in money, are worse than useless because, while failing to prevent men from playing for pay, they breed deceit and hypocrisy."

It's fairly simple: The NCAA has had an abysmal history of legislating against human dignity.

Finally, a breath of fresh air appeared upon the scene six years ago when Dick Schultz, a former college coach and college athletic director and a man with good common sense and sensitivity, was appointed as the new NCAA executive director. Then, after an independent investigator concluded that some small loans were improperly made to athletes at the University of Virginia while Schultz was the athletic director there, he was gone, as quick as we could say "Shazam." This was a huge loss for college athletes and college athletics.

Jim Litke of The Associated Press summed up the tons of stupid rules when he wrote: "The chances of sinning under NCAA bylaws are almost endless. The way the rules are written and being enforced right now, a big kid on an elementary school basketball team coached by Mother Teresa would need luck and a few tactical lapses of memory to survive an investigation, and it's getting harder to tell the good guys from the bad."

Is there an answer? Yes, there is only one: Start all over again. The superpowers should form their own organization and instead of tons of ludicrous rules, make sure Rule 1 and all the other rules are simple, fair, and will not breed any more deceit and hypocrisy. ■

No

In the Big Ten we have 22 programs—11 football and 11 basketball—to produce revenue for 7,000 amateur athletes in 235 sports. If you have 105 players on your football team, where does paying all these athletes begin and end? You can't select players from teams that are successful in a commercial sense and bestow some kind of benefit on them without doing it for everybody else. Under federal law we have the responsibility to be equitable to both men and women.

If the kids want to be paid, they ought to go out and test the pro market. There are minor leagues in baseball and football, opportunities in basketball here and abroad. Shaquille O'Neal made \$40 million in Orlando. He probably contributed a great deal to LSU's revenue productivity—but he didn't *have* to go to college. He probably could have turned pro after high school. No one is required to pursue an education. And if student-athletes don't get what they want after negotiating with a pro sports team, we ought to allow them to return to intercollegiate athletic competition.

We have a hard time making ends meet as it is. Big Ten schools are in

as good a financial situation as any schools in the country, but nearly all of our revenue is produced by two sports: football and basketball. The myth is that colleges have enough money to provide more than scholarships for their athletes; the fact is that, unlike us, most schools—nearly 250 out of 300 in Division I—are paying their way from general institutional funds. In effect, at most NCAA institutions, intercollegiate athletics is competing with academic interests for general fund dollars.

In other words, if you were to pay athletes, you'd be taking money from the library to give to them. Our attitude is any revenues generated, regardless of the sport, are the property of the institution. That money should be used to provide opportunities for men and women in all of the other sports.

The rub is that there are few programs that generate a lot of money, but the current system is not set up to pay just those athletes on those teams. These athletes aren't being exploited; they're playing for a team in exchange for a free education. There's no question that commercialism butts up against the primary mission of the school, but the fact is, if you had to pay your athletes, 85% to 90% of all collegiate sports would shut down. Only a handful would be able to survive.

Some argue that college athletes should be unionized, but organized labor in a college setting, where the institution is sponsoring the sport, doesn't make sense. Our schools would go out of the intercollegiate athletics business before they would ever recognize paying players. If a college athlete is playing for a revenue-producing sport, that money is the property of the university, and as long as the university is using money to provide more opportunity, I don't have a problem. ■

JIM DELANY
became the fifth
commissioner of
the Big Ten
Conference in
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Law

Foul Is Fair in Illinois

BASEBALL FANS AT WRIGLEY Field or Comiskey Park should pay especially close attention to the action on the diamond next time they go to a game, because a new law in Illinois limits their rights to compensation for any injuries they receive from batted balls or flying bats. The Baseball Facility Liability Act of 1992, which eliminates most lawsuits by spectators who are hit by a ball or bat, applies to all baseball stadiums in the state, from the Little League level up.

Owners and operators of ballparks in Illinois are now free to install any size screening they wish behind home plate, because fans no longer can point to insufficient screening as a cause of their injuries. According to White Sox executive vice president Howard Pizer, the new law is the first of its kind in the country. It halts a recent trend in court cases that has tended to expand the rights of baseball spectators who sustain injuries at the game.

Historically, fans were thought to have "assumed the risk" of injury at the stadium when they bought a ticket, and cases against teams or parks for damages almost always were tossed out of court. But in 1981 the New York Court of Appeals, the highest court in the state, found that the operator of a high school ballpark was required to provide screening for the area behind home plate, and that a jury could decide what size screening was sufficient.

The Facility Liability Act was precipitated by fears that Illinois courts were about render the "assumption of risk" doctrine obsolete. The impetus came from an appellate court ruling in May 1992 in a case involving the White Sox. In 1986 Blanca Coronel, who was attending her first game at



Caution: Fans in Wrigley Field go after fly balls at their own risk.

old Comiskey Park, was seated approximately three seats away from the screen. Coronel glanced away from the game during the 6th inning to grab a handful of popcorn, and at that precise moment she was struck by a line-drive foul, which broke her jaw.

The court was unimpressed with the "assumption of risk" arguments put forth by the White Sox and, noting that the old Comiskey Park had one of the

smallest screens in the majors, instead ruled that a jury properly could consider whether the screening was sufficient. It also permitted the jury to decide whether the White Sox, by printing a cautionary notice on ticket stubs and flashing a message on the scoreboard asking fans to be alert, had warned Coronel adequately of the dangers of foul balls or inadvertently thrown bats. Finding that food vendors and the

consumption of the food were likely to distract baseball fans from the action on the field, the Illinois court refused to throw the case out.

The White Sox applied all of their clout to push the Facility Liability Act through the Illinois general assembly and obtain Gov. Jim Edgar's signature in the course of a few months. According to Pizer and former state Sen. William Marovitz, who sponsored the bill in the Illinois Senate, the Cubs, along with several amateur and school sports associations, also strongly supported the legislation. Objections were raised by the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association, which wanted to preserve the rights of

fans to sue for deliberately harmful conduct, such as when a player throws a bat into the stands out of anger or frustration, but after a minor language change the legislation sailed through quickly. As Roger McAuliffe, the House sponsor of the bill, put it, "The reason it happened is that somebody got hurt at a White Sox game."

McAuliffe argues that the legislation "merely changed the law back" to its status before the

Money

Cold Cash for Hot Columns

SO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR a career in sports but you don't want to be on television? Sportswriting is always an option, though it isn't nearly as lucrative as sportscasting.

The *New York Daily News'* Mike Lupica, considered by many to be the best sportswriter in the country, takes home \$300,000, barely what a mid-level sportscaster on cable makes. The average salary for a sports-

writer, roughly \$50,000, actually has risen in recent years because of competition between newspapers for the best writers. Lupica, Mitch Albom of the *Detroit Free Press*, and Blackie Sherrod of *The Dallas Morning News* all were given raises by their papers to keep them in the fold.

Though the newspaper business doesn't pay as well as the TV game, writers have a key advantage: Broadcasters use

The highest-paid sportswriters in the country:

Mike Lupica , <i>New York Daily News</i>	\$300,000
Mitch Albom , <i>Detroit Free Press</i>	250,000
Blackie Sherrod , <i>Dallas Morning News</i>	225,000
Jim Murray , <i>Los Angeles Times</i>	200,000
Rick Reilly , <i>Sports Illustrated</i>	150,000
Leigh Montville , <i>Sports Illustrated</i>	130,000
Tony Kornheiser , <i>Washington Post</i>	125,000
Thomas Boswell , <i>Washington Post</i>	120,000
Sally Jenkins , <i>Sports Illustrated</i>	115,000
Christine Brennan , <i>Washington Post</i>	115,000

them as "expert commentators." These days many top writers—including Lupica, Tony Kornheiser of *The Washington Post*, and Will McDonough of *The Boston Globe*—supplement their income with television or radio contracts.—*Liz Comte*



FIRE



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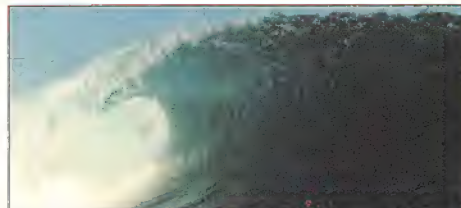
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Coronel case. Marovitz, a prominent Chicago attorney, maintains that "everybody who goes to the ballpark will now know in advance" that they are assuming the risk of being struck by a bat or ball. But the Illinois law leaves most fans injured as a result of inadequate stadium screening with almost no options. If similar laws are enacted across the country, the result for baseball fans will be greater risk each time they buy a ticket.—Linda J. Cohen

Games

Take 2,000 J's and Call Him in the Morning

WE'VE SEEN SHAQUILLE O'NEAL dunk, seen him rebound, seen him block shots. We've even heard him rap. But for the most part, we haven't seen Shaq shoot. Don't worry, though—Buzz Braman is working on it.

Who's he? He's a guy who once sank 738 straight free throws on a whim and once went 246 for 250 from the college three-point line as part of a job interview. He's a nephew of Philadelphia Eagles owner Norman Braman. Most important, he's a former high school star and ex-car salesman who had a revelation one day while he lay in a hospital bed with a ruptured disk in his back. Braman realized his life's calling was as a shooting coach—a job that, unfortunately for him, didn't exist at the time. Undaunted, he walked away from a comfortable career helping to run his uncle's many auto dealerships to become a shot doctor.

Braman was one of the greatest high school shooters ever in the Washington, D.C. area and later played at East Carolina. By the time he had his revelation in 1987, though, Braman was 31 years old and hadn't picked up a basketball in eight years.

What to do? Simple. Braman started to shoot 500 to 1,000 shots a day. "I knew that to get someone's attention I'd have to shoot the lights out," he says.

Once he got the touch back, Braman became a veritable travel-

ing sideshow. He showed up at the Philadelphia 76ers rookie camp and sank those 246 college treys in 250 tries, a staggering .984 accuracy rate. He went on TNT during the NBA's All-Star Weekend and beat Larry Bird's score in the Long-Distance Shootout.

However, all he had to show for his efforts were a few letters of recommendation from NBA executives. Braman, who had developed a disdain for the poor shooting fundamentals he saw rampant in the league, felt like he was offering an umbrella to people who would rather stand in the rain. And after two years without a job, he was out about \$100,000. Finally, though, then-Sixers coach Jim Lynam accepted an umbrella. At Lynam's urging, the 76ers hired Braman as shooting coach for the 1989-90 season.

Braman stayed with Philadelphia for three years before striking out on his own, and then he hit the mother lode when O'Neal, after some serious courting, decided to entrust Braman with his jump shot. Working with O'Neal's release may seem a bit

like tinkering with the small arms on an aircraft carrier, but Braman doesn't think so. His goals are to make Shaq less of a liability from the line and to enlarge his arsenal of shots beyond the dunks he relies on so heavily now. "We're trying to develop an offensive game," Braman says. "A jump hook, a turnaround, a Patrick Ewing-type baseline jumper."

After Braman worked with O'Neal early in the '92-93 season, the Magic hired him to work with the rest of the team as well. He's also got a shooting academy in Orlando, where you can polish your jumper for \$45 an hour.

Clearly, Braman's got a hot hand.—Ed Miller

Culture

Bring Back the Broad Street Bullies

AT FIRST GLANCE, MARK TOPAZ hardly looks like an expert on vio-

lence. Yet the unassuming 35-year-old Brooklyn College graduate has emerged as the ultimate archivist of hockey fighting.

As publisher and editor of *The Aggressive Hockey Report*, Topaz is the leading proponent of a violent brand of hockey that has become a turn-off for the new breed of fans and progressive NHL owners. Unfazed, Topaz crusades as hard in favor of fighting as Wayne Gretzky does against it. What's more, *TAHR*, now in its third year of operation, boasts a subscription list of more than 400 readers throughout Canada and the United States. "Fanatics subscribe to our magazine," says Topaz. "We have your hardcore people who subscribe because this is the first time that anyone has catered to [their] particular tastes. Is what we do a little tongue-in-cheek? Put it this way: I don't think we take it as seriously as some of the people who read us."

Topaz, who also works as a sports graphics coordinator for SportsChannel and other TV companies, got into the hockey fight game in 1969. Those were the

Deals

Oh, To Be in His Shoes

THE NEXT TIME YOU SEE Duke Blue Devils coach Mike Krzyzewski, take a look at his multimillion-dollar feet. Thanks to a 15-year contract with Nike that will pay him approximately \$400,000 a year, "Coach K" has the most valuable feet in all of college basketball.

Krzyzewski used to wear Adidas, but Nike offered him a \$1 million signing bonus that Adidas refused to match. Why did Nike promise Krzyzewski nearly \$6 million, plus an option on 200,000 shares of stock, just to wear the company's shoes? One reason: sales.

It's no secret that high-profile college basketball teams are great vehicles for selling shoes. "The players wear them, the kids wear them," says Michael Bell, executive vice president of

Converse, another of Nike's major competitors. "The teams help us convey the message that we make performance products."

Of course, NCAA rules prohibit payments to amateur athletes, so the shoe companies get around the rule by signing the coaches. Some coaches of small-

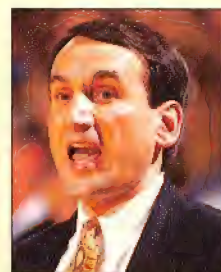
er schools just get shoes and a few T-shirts; others, such as Krzyzewski, get a hefty cash payment. In return, the shoe company gets exposure. For example, Nike wants to get into the uniform business, and it will use the Blue Devils as a starting point; as part of his contract, Krzyzewski will dress his team in Nike warm-up suits, uniforms, and shoes.

Krzyzewski's deal with Nike may be the most lucrative one for a college coach, but it isn't unique. Of the 64 teams that participated in the 1993 NCAA

Tournament, Nike shod 24, including Nevada-Las Vegas, Seton Hall, Temple, Georgia Tech, and Michigan. Georgetown coach John Thompson not only outfits his Hoyas in the shoes but sits on the Nike board of directors.

Converse also has its share of big-name clients. Three of the Final Four teams in last year's tournament—North Carolina, Kansas, and Kentucky—wore Converse. Tar Heels coach Dean Smith, Jayhawks coach Roy Williams, and Rick Pitino of the Wildcats all have

contracts with the company. And it's not just men these companies are after. Converse also outfitted the Vanderbilt Commodores, the Texas Tech Lady Raiders, and the Ohio State Buckeyes, all of whom appeared in the women's Division I Final Four.—L.C.



Mike Krzyzewski

Topaz's favorite fighters of recent eras:

- Late 1960s-early '70s: Orland Kurtenbach, John Ferguson, Ted Harris, Wayne Cashman, Jerry Korab.
- Mid-'70s: Dave Schultz, Bob (Battleship) Kelly, Dan Maloney, Behn Wilson.
- Late '70s: Bob Nystrom, Clark Gillies, Behn Wilson, Nick Fotiu.
- Early '80s: Dave Semenko, Dave Brown, Tim Hunter, Jay Miller.
- Late '80s to present: Bob Probert, Joe Kocur, Troy Crowder, Ken Baumgartner.



BRUCE BENNETT

Baumgartner vs. McSorley: Now *that's* hockey!

more primitive days of the NHL, when bench-clearing brawls were *de rigueur* and sluggers such as Randy Holt of the Washington Capitals roamed the ice looking for action. "Holt was my idol because he was always exciting and was the one guy who had the guts—when Philadelphia had the toughest team in the NHL—to stand up to them," says Topaz. "Even though Randy didn't have backing most of the time, he'd go in there and give it to them the way they gave it to everyone else."

Players like Holt are featured in *TAHR* because Topaz and his readers have a soft spot for the Dave Schultzes and Lou Fontinatos of yesteryear. "Every issue we take a look at a particular incident, game, or series and give the background and go into detail as to what occurred," Topaz says. "We have 'Letters to the Editor' and 'Ask Dr. Fight,' where people can write in with any question they need answered on the subject."

Not surprisingly, Topaz takes a dim view of the toned-down game of the '90s. "Do you really think hockey fans want a fancy-skating game? No way. They want hard-hitting, aggressive hockey."

According to Topaz's ratings, Bob Probert has been the reigning heavyweight

champion of the NHL over the past decade. With that in mind, he thought it only appropriate to feature a profile of the Red Wings blaster in *TAHR*.

"We thought we were going to do an interview with him," Topaz recalls. "It was all set, but when we went back to do it he said he didn't want to talk if it was going to be about fighting. Hey, I'm sorry, but there are only two reasons to talk to Bob Probert: No. 1, his problems with drugs, and No. 2, fighting. That's it. What did he think—we wanted to talk to him about his Bobby Orr-like moves, his Jean Beliveau-like passing ability? I mean, c'mon."

Topaz contends that hockey fighting is not nearly as bad as it's made out to be in the media. He also makes a keen distinction between an enforcer and a goon.

"Someone who goes out and fights fair and square, drops his gloves, protects his team, and looks out for his teammates is an enforcer," Topaz says. "A goon is someone who will whack at people with his stick, who will cheapshot people, who won't drop his gloves, who—if he fights—will

hide behind a shield so that you can't hit him. To me, that's a goon—guys like Ulf Samuelsson, Dale Hunter, Keith Acton, who give cheap shots and don't get into a fight unless they know it's someone they can take. Then they hang on for dear life."

Topaz gets fighting mad when he contemplates how the NHL has moved away from the frontier spirit of yesteryear. He points out that traditionally tough clubs such as the Chicago Blackhawks and Philadelphia Flyers are among the league's most successful franchises at the gate.

"The NHL should be promoting violence the way the NFL did with the Purple People Eaters and the Fearsome Foursome," Topaz says. "If the NHL would stop trying to cater to these media wimps and look at what sells tickets, it would sell the game that way, also. If the league keeps getting softer it will turn off the old-time fans. Eventually, there'll be a big dropoff in attendance if the NHL doesn't watch out."—*Stan Fischler*

Topaz says two fights stand out in his mind above all others:

- Garry Howatt vs. Darryl Sittler: "They fought for two minutes and wound up slugging it out on their knees."
- Dave Semenko vs. Tim Hunter: "Semenko landed the first 10 or 12 punches, and then Hunter came back after Semenko tired and landed 19 unanswered punches. After the linesmen came up, Semenko dropped Hunter with a sucker punch, touching off a brawl."

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By BOB RUBIN

NBC's Rent-a-Coach Philosophy Pays Off

DA COACH IS NOW da broadcaster. In May NBC won a spirited bidding war with CBS for the services of former Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka. The network will feature him prominently in the studio as part of its pro football pregame show, "NFL Live," and also use him on golf telecasts. A few days after landing Ditka, NBC made it two straight over CBS by signing former Washington Redskins coach Joe Gibbs as a game analyst.

Both announcements further solidified NBC's standing as a halfway house for ex-coaches between jobs. With their exemplary track records, Ditka and Gibbs certainly will be highly sought by the pros; look for their names to be mentioned every time an NFL coach bites the dust.

Pat Riley, Bill Walsh, and Bill Parcells all did stints at NBC before returning to coaching. Mike Fratello's name came up in connection with every NBA coaching vacancy. And after Bobby Beathard resigned as GM of the Redskins, he stopped in for a year before taking over the San Diego Chargers.

Some have criticized NBC's rent-a-coach approach, but network executive producer Terry O'Neil defends it as being in the best interest of viewers. "We ask ourselves, even if it's for as short a time as one year, will our viewers be well served by having Mike Ditka and Joe Gibbs on the air?" O'Neil says. "We think they will. We look back on the work of Bill Parcells, who was here for two years, and Bill Walsh, who was here for three,



Ditka easily could jump ship the way Walsh and Parcells did, but NBC's willing to risk it to get the most current insights.

and ask, 'Was it a good thing, or bad?' We think it was good.

"As long as these guys are diligent, don't pull any punches, and don't come with a set agenda to return to the game, we think they're great assets. By definition, if a guy is on top of his game he's going to be attractive to owners and GMs, but the alternative is to hire people who have no contemporary feel or touch."

But Walsh and Parcells are back on the sidelines, and it's distinctly possible that Gibbs and even Ditka—despite his protestations—will be again, too. Doesn't NBC sacrifice continuity with its ever-changing lineups?

"Whatever we lose there we gain in contemporary knowledge and freshness," O'Neil says. "The fact is, Mike Ditka can come into the studio and say, 'When we

played Dallas last year, here's what we did to take away the sprint draw to Emmitt Smith.' A guy who has been out of the game for 10 years can't bring that element to your telecast."

Ditka appears to be a natural on TV. When he coached the Bears, his Sunday morning pregame show was the highest-rated program in Chicago in its time slot. He worked the Super Bowl pregame show for CBS in 1989 and for NBC last January and got raves. O'Neil promises "NFL Live" will be "tailored to Mike's strengths and, in many ways, revolve around him."

And what does O'Neil see as Ditka's strengths? "Steve McMichael has said 'Mike Ditka is the NFL.' Tough physically

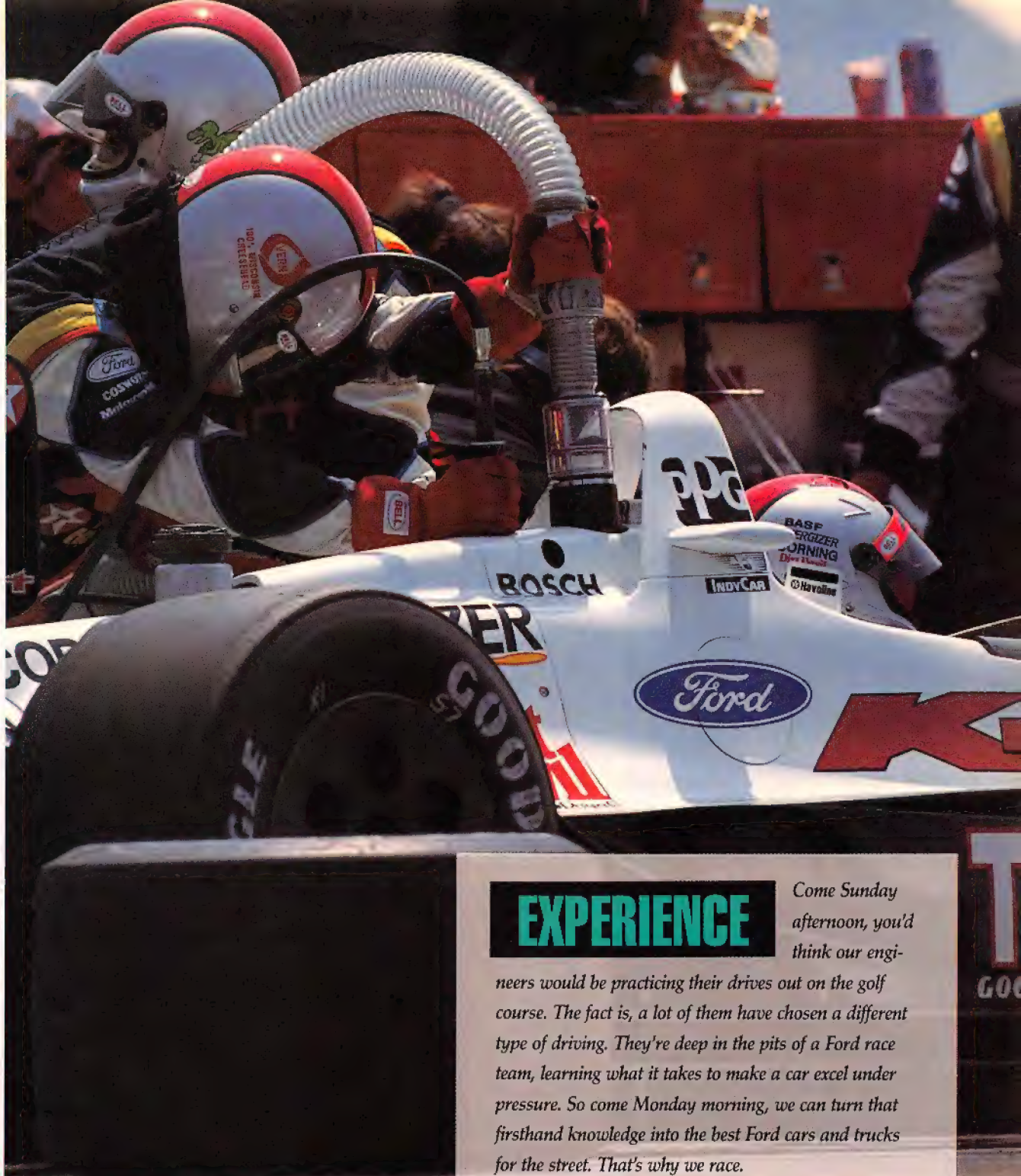
and emotionally, he's the very embodiment of the game. And he's one of the last great American characters, well beyond sports in his recognizability and appeal. That's where having him in the studio will be an advantage over him being the disembodied voice of an analyst.

"I'm not saying he couldn't do analysis. I have no doubt he'd be terrific at it. But you'd lose the on-camera presence, the eyes, the haircut, the gestures."

On the sidelines, the eyes would sometimes roll wildly, the gestures on occasion threaten life and limb. Isn't cool and analytical playing against type for Ditka?

"It would be if we wanted him to be cool and analytical," O'Neil says, "but we want him to be himself. We had a rehearsal before the Super Bowl pregame show, and Mike was a little flat. [After-

4
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MEDIA

ward] I told him, 'We don't want you trying to imitate every bad sportscaster you've ever seen. We want you to be Mike Ditka.' He said, 'Don't worry about it. I'm going to come out swinging tomorrow.' And he did. He was great.

"One thing about him is that he has always been unpredictable. His watchability is heightened because you never know quite what to expect from him. We have to keep giving him the proper stimuli to get him to react. That's our responsibility on the production end."

Ditka knows expectations are high, and he isn't intimidated. The idea of Mike Ditka being intimidated by anything is laughable. "I believe after 33 years in the game, I have a fair amount of knowledge and can bring viewers a realistic and honest opinion," he says. "I'm not there to cut people down, but I'm not there to build them up, either. I'll say what's on my mind. I've never been bashful.

"I think I can speak to the CEO as well as the guy sitting in the bar. I'm not going to get too technical or philosophical or talk over anyone's head. Everyone wants to get into this and that and make a genius of everybody, but like Lombardi said years ago, if you can't block, tackle, and execute, you can't play football."

Though Ditka says his relationship with O'Neil was a factor in choosing NBC (they're both sons of steel workers from western Pennsylvania), it wasn't the only one. He preferred the studio to analysis because he didn't feel like traveling this fall, and he also was intrigued by the opportunity to broadcast golf.

No, Ditka won't be whispering, "...over to you, Johnny, on 16." He'll do one- or two-minute features, and perhaps take a lesson from a pro. "I'd like to think I know something about a few things other than football, and golf is one," Ditka says.

Ditka shed a few tears after his firing by the Bears in January. Now he's more philosophical about it, though you can detect a residue of feelings beneath his words. "I made a statement many years ago that the moment they didn't want me there, I didn't want to be there," he says. "That time came. It hurt at the moment and will probably hurt again when the ball's kicked off in the fall. But it's a dead issue. I'm no longer a Bear.

"I spent 11 years in Chicago as a coach and six as a player, and my contributions are in the record book. That's where I'll leave it. I have no animosity toward anyone. I had a great run. I wish nothing but the best to the organization and the new coaching staff. I'm not going to gripe about anyone or anything."

It's going to be hard to get used to the Bears without Ditka, so closely identified were one with the other. However, Ditka doesn't buy that premise.

"Winning has a way of making people forget everything," he says. "As soon as the Bears win a few, people will say, 'Well, the change was inevitable. It was time to get rid of the old man.' We're heroes just for a moment. People build you up to knock you down. I understand the rules of the game. I don't like them, but I understand them.

"The only way [a return to the sidelines] will happen is if an organization is willing to let me do things my way. I'm not going to conform to the ideas of people I don't think know the game of football." A not-so-oblique shot at Bears president Mike McCaskey? "If the right opportunity with the right owner came along I'd take a whack at it, but I don't expect that to happen. I think, to a degree, I'm a dinosaur...but I'm glad I am."

Actually, Ditka's aiming higher than coach. He was part of a group that made an unsuccessful bid to buy the Dolphins from the financially troubled Robbie family. Had the deal gone through, Ditka would have been the general manager.

"I've had a good run as player, assistant coach, and head coach," Ditka says. "The thought of taking a club and molding it, bringing in my own people and building something from the start my way, appeals to me more than anything."

Ditka says the aspects of coaching he'll miss most are the relationships with staff and players and the week-long preparation process leading up to game day. But there are parts of the job he's glad to be rid of. The biggest pain was the scrutiny and what he considers some cheap shots he took from the media.

"You're put under a microscope," he says. "If I was an easy-going guy it wouldn't have bothered me, but I'm volatile, I'm vocal, and right or wrong, I do what I want to do.

"I didn't have any privacy at the end, and there were things written about me that weren't true. I can't beat that. It's going to be read by three million people, and there's nothing I can do about it. I don't mean this as a general criticism. The media around the country, and with one or two exceptions in Chicago, have treated me outstandingly. Those one or two didn't treat me so kindly, but that didn't bring the world to an end, either."

And now he's about to become a full-fledged member of the media. "Right," Ditka says. "That means I can do no wrong. I'm an expert." ■

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Derrick Thomas: There's No Doubt About it

The Kansas City Chiefs' young star may or may not be the NFL's best defensive player, but he's the best linebacker since Lawrence Taylor

By ED WERDER

DERRICK THOMAS IS PUMPED. He's the leader of the sack for the Kansas City Chiefs, a team of considerable talent but one that has been unable to capture a championship trophy since Len Dawson retired. Of course, a drought like that isn't unusual in the AFC, but the prospect of ending it is exactly what has Thomas so charged up. The wrenching despair of last year has become hopeful optimism for this season, and he's composed his hit list in anticipation the Chiefs will contend to the end.

"This team has stockpiled the talent necessary to take us to the top," he says. "You can go down the list right now and find a household name at every position. That's pretty strong."

General manager Carl Peterson and coach Marty Schottenheimer made certain the Chiefs were major players in the offseason. The team picked up Joe Montana and Marcus Allen, former Super Bowl MVPs and veteran leaders in the locker room. Furthermore, the Chiefs were careful to secure their future as much as possible with a lucrative, long-term contract for another player: Thomas, who happens to be the most imposing defensive force in pro football.

A restricted free agent, Thomas turned down the chance to sign with the Detroit

Lions to remain with the Chiefs. His new four-year, \$12.3 million contract makes him the second-highest-paid defensive player in the league, after Green Bay's Reggie White. That status almost seems an injustice since Thomas has established himself as the long-awaited "next Lawrence Taylor." Many other players were projected to fill those shoes, only to fall short, but Thomas has earned the right to tool around in the black Mercedes 500 SL convertible with the "IMAYDIT" vanity plates.

The next LT? "The guy in Kansas City," says Taylor himself. "If you're looking for the next LT, he's the one." The fact is, Thomas has a chance to finish his career No. 1 in sacks, replacing you-know-who.

A player of iron ego and incredible will power, Thomas possesses incomparable speed for his position. His 14.5 sacks last season included three on Philadelphia's Randall Cunningham in one game, three more on Denver's John Elway in another. In the past four seasons Thomas has notched more sacks than any other NFL player. Since the Chiefs made him their first-round draft choice in 1989, Thomas has transformed quarterbacks into question marks precisely 58 times and made the Pro Bowl at the conclusion of each season. Thomas' 58 sacks in four years easily surpasses the 37.5 Taylor compiled in his first

four seasons. After four seasons Pat Swilling had 38, Clyde Simmons 31.5; White had 70 after four NFL seasons but tuned up with two years in the USFL. In the past three years Thomas has recorded 48 sacks, 18 forced fumbles, and nine fumble recoveries, two of which he returned for touchdowns. While White is the only player to average at least one sack per game in his career, Thomas is only five off that pace. Furthermore, he set the league record for sacks in a game with seven against the Seattle Seahawks in 1990.

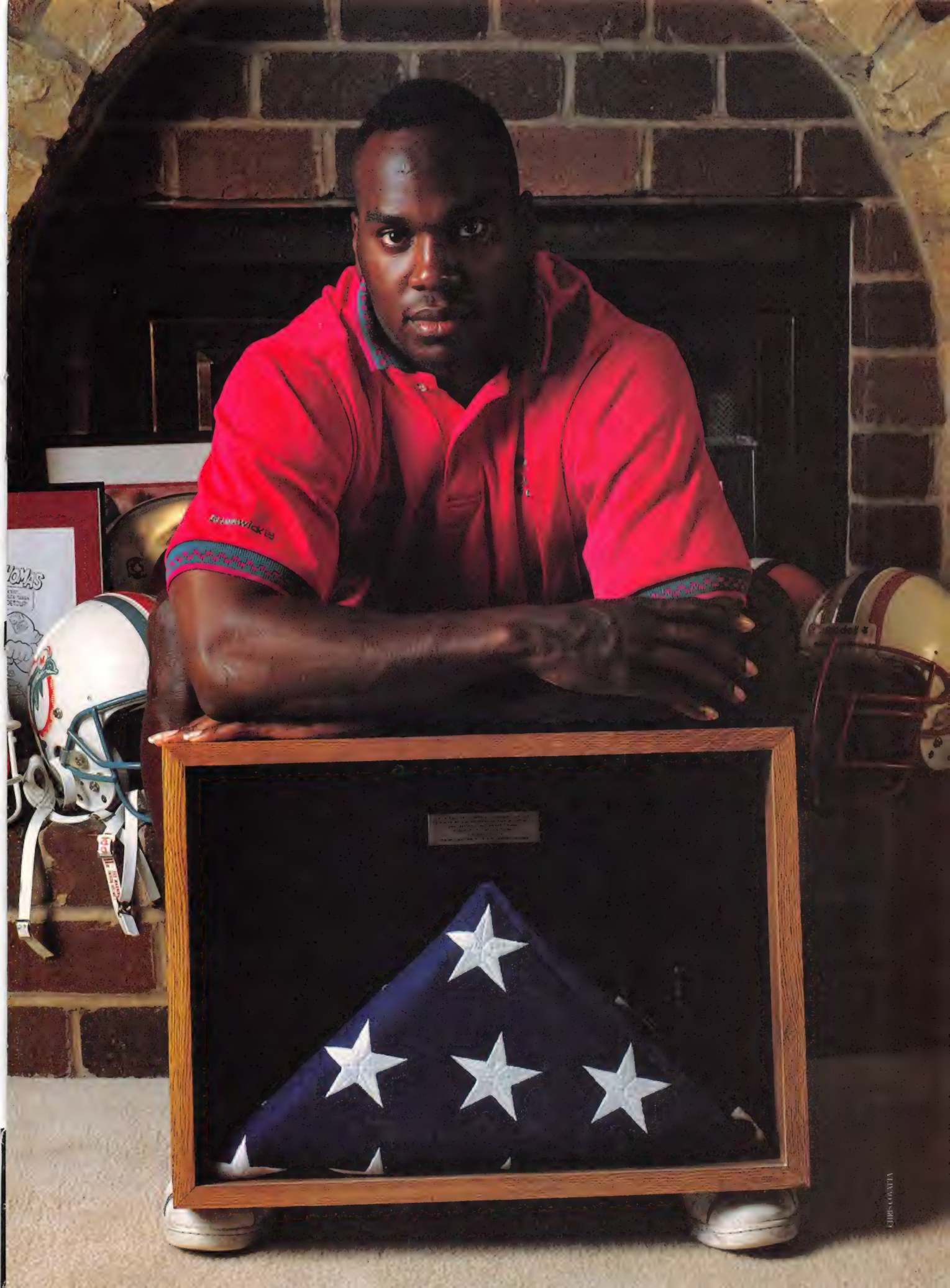
His talent was not always so apparent. Thomas, now 26, grew up six blocks from the University of Miami campus without luring a scholarship offer from Hurricanes coach Jimmy Johnson, now with the Dallas Cowboys. "He won a [college] championship without me," Thomas says, "but I think I might have helped him win some more."

While his importance to the Chiefs cannot be overstated, Thomas also has a considerable social conscience. He started a literacy program in Kansas City and spoke on the topic before Congress last year. More recently, Thomas went to Washington for another important appointment, this time to make a social statement at the Vietnam War Memorial. For the first time, Thomas was able to brush his fingers across a name engraved in the wall: that of his father, Robert James Thomas, co-pilot of a B-52 shot down as it returned from a combat mission dubbed "Operation Linebacker II."

Thomas is a man of constant motion, but INSIDE SPORTS recently was able to pin him down for a few hours to discuss his football team, his future, and, of course, his father.

INSIDE SPORTS: Last season marked the first time since you became part of the team that the Chiefs failed to improve their postseason performance. In your rookie season Kansas City had a winning record for the first time in three years, the next year the team made the playoffs, and in your third season you made the playoffs and won a first-round game. But last year the Chiefs were shut out in the first round. Is the team on the decline, or was last season an aberration?

DERRICK THOMAS: I'm not concerned about this team's future. We've done some pretty good recruiting in the offseason, so I don't think we'll have problems. We didn't



do the things we needed to last season to advance to the next level. When we played San Diego in the playoffs, it was zero-zero in the third quarter. At that point we needed to put points on the board and take control, but that didn't happen—San Diego put some points up and beat us. There were some things we had to address in the off-season, some positions where change was necessary.

IS: The recruiting you mentioned brought the Chiefs two of the most successful offensive players of the '80s. What are Joe Montana and Marcus Allen still capable of, and how will they impact the Chiefs?

DT: The truth is, we don't know what they're capable of. But I've had the opportunity to see Joe many, many times. He's been impressive, and I'm thrilled at the opportunity to have him on my team. I don't think he's lost a thing. With him and Marcus Allen—to have two of the greatest athletes who have ever played football in this league is remarkable. I'm confident they both have a lot of quality time left. I hope they're in the right frame of mind and are physically able to finish their Hall of Fame careers with us. I hope we can end their careers with more glorious championship moments.

I'll tell you this: They won't be embarrassed to play with us. We have a lot of pride, and on defense we'll do the things necessary to keep this team in the ball game. And now, with a new offensive system and the people we have, we'll score a lot of points. This combination will take us to the top.

IS: This is possibly the first time in your career with the Chiefs that you aren't the most successful and accomplished player on the team. Will you be uncomfortable with that?

DT: I think it will benefit me. Joe and Marcus have brought the national media to Kansas City, where they haven't been for a long, long time. This is an opportunity for me to display my greatness. To bring Joe Montana and Marcus Allen to this team only does good things for me. It enhances what I can accomplish. I'm not mad if they come in to talk to Joe Montana. I've never tried to carry myself as *the* player on my team. I don't want to say I'm better than anybody else. If my defensive backs don't cover the receivers, I don't have time to reach the quarterback. If the front guys don't command respect from the offensive line, then they're going to shift to where I am. If the linebackers can't cover the backs, it doesn't work. The only way for me to be successful

is for everyone else to be successful. I'll gladly pass the torch to Joe Montana. I hope we become like the Dallas Cowboys. Nobody knows anybody on their defense, and they're successful. When people don't know your defense, your team is doing well.

IS: The Chiefs teams of the past have put immense pressure on the defense to perform because of the limited potential of the offense. How frustrating has that been?

DT: I know sometimes this team looked one-sided, but we had some people who struggled in an offensive system they simply weren't comfortable with. And I truly don't believe it was as one-sided as it looked, because there were times we didn't play well on defense. But our offensive philosophy was to pound the ball and take



"Once I get into the zone I just go, and I don't stop till the game is over."

time off the clock. If you scored you scored, but that wasn't necessarily the goal. Most of the time we won the time-of-possession battle—we kept the ball—but we weren't posting numbers on the scoreboard. That's been our problem.

IS: So you're confident that the new system offensive coordinator Paul Hackett has installed, the San Francisco-style attack, will lead to success?

DT: Need I answer that? It's produced four Super Bowls. It's a tremendous concept based on short timing routes. We won't put as much pressure on our offensive linemen as with the traditional offenses where the

quarterback takes five- and seven-step drops. Believe me, I know the problems that causes for a pass-rusher. It makes a guy like myself change everything when you play a team like this. I love to play those teams with the traditional offenses. I'd have loved to play the Chiefs with the offense we used to have. Let them take those five- and seven-step drops. Given those kinds of opportunities, I'm going to capitalize.

IS: The Chiefs' performance has been typical of Schottenheimer teams. He consistently put the Cleveland Browns in the playoffs but never has been successful in the postseason. The Chiefs' moves are short-term solutions apparently made to provide Marty the opportunity to finally reach the Super Bowl. Do you interpret this to mean he has pressure on him to win now?

DT: I don't want say there's pressure on him, but it's there. He's proved himself capable of taking this team to a certain level. I think he has to show the ability to get the job done now that he has all the talent he needs. Fortunately for all of us, I don't see anything stopping us.

When we lost that heartbreaker to Miami in the playoffs in 1990, I think we had the team that could have taken it all the way. With the talent we have, this year is the same situation.

IS: The Buffalo Bills have been to three successive Super Bowls and lost them all. Do you consider them vulnerable now?

DT: I think so. They'll be tough, but I don't know how far they can go. I don't know if they have that oneness they've had the past few years. If they do, they'll contend at the end. Hopefully we'll play them for the AFC championship. I'd like nothing better.

IS: Do you resent the fact the NFC teams consider the AFC to be competitively inferior?

DT: We play like NFC teams. We've always had the NFC defense. Now we have an NFC offense. We can play with those teams.

IS: But everyone will pick the Cowboys to repeat based on their show of strength in the playoffs and Super Bowl.

DT: Not! I won't. The score was 17-10 when we played them. I don't see them as indestructible. They were great once, but greatness runs out.

IS: Defensive coordinator Dave Adolph switched to a 4-3 scheme last season, and there were times you appeared uncomfortable. Your pass-rushing opportunities diminished because you had more pass-

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coverage responsibilities. It seemed the Chiefs wanted more Wilber Marshall and less Lawrence Taylor. Will that continue this season?

DT: We have a few new loops and variations to our 4-3 defense planned for this season, where I'll have the opportunity to be freed up a lot more. I had to play with a lot more pass responsibility the second half of last season, which was all right. But I'd rather be on the line of scrimmage making things happen.

IS: The plan apparently is to have you play as a defensive end on all downs. Will rushing from a three-point stance as opposed to a standup position force an adjustment?

DT: I've come off the corner both ways, so it won't make much difference.

IS: You've referred to yourself as "a student of the sack." Who have you studied, and what have you learned?

DT: I just like to watch other people. I've studied them all. I try to take a piece here and a piece there, put them together, and commit them to memory. Derrick Thomas is part Lawrence Taylor, part Richard Dent, and part Reggie White. I've watched them to find out what they can do that I couldn't. Now when I get caught in certain situations, I can do something that maybe I haven't been capable of doing in the past.

IS: You have a lot more sacks at this point in your career than Taylor compiled in the same number of seasons. Do you think you're comparable to him in his prime?

DT: I'm just getting into my prime years now. Hopefully I'm as comfortable in our defensive system as Lawrence has been in his. That will be the determining factor. Last year I was placed in a position I was familiar with but uncomfortable in. Now it's time to hunt. Let the hunt begin.

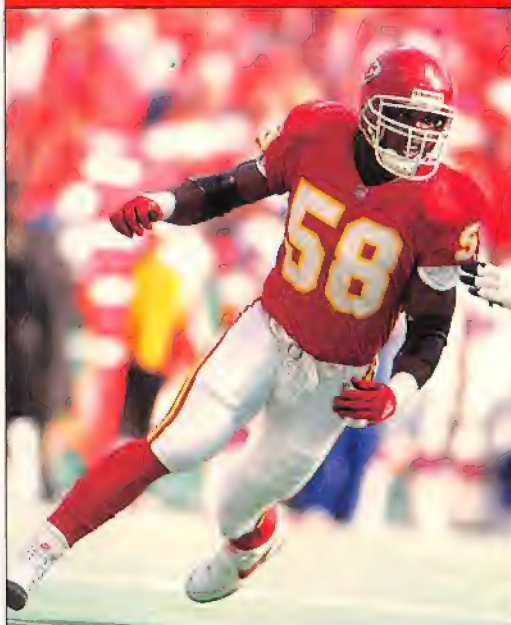
IS: There have been so many outside linebackers referred to as "the next Lawrence Taylor." Have you truly earned that designation with your performance the first four seasons?

DT: I want to achieve and exceed everything Lawrence Taylor has done—with respect for what he's done. A lot of people have taken the approach like, "Screw LT. I can do this or that." I don't. I don't know if I actually worship him, but I have a strong respect for him because no man at this position has done the things he has. I think about where I am and where I want to go, then close my eyes and see Lawrence Taylor. I am where I am. He is where I want to be. It keeps coming up LT.

I came in with a lot of hype, just like him. I had a great rookie season and made the Pro Bowl, just like him. The third and fourth years, I was a little better, and my role started to build, just like him. Before this season starts, I'll look and see what Lawrence did in his fifth season. This is about the time Lawrence won the Super Bowl for the first time and was the most valuable player in the league. It's time for me to help my defense and put my team in that position. Maybe I can do it.

IS: In your career, you've shown a propensity for stringing together multiple-sack performances and then going through two or three games without making a sack. For instance, you have three games with four

"I've studied them all. I'm part LT, part Richard Dent, part Reggie White."



or more sacks, seven with three or more and a dozen in which you accounted for at least two sacks. How can you explain such a statistic?

DT: Sometimes I just feel it, and when it happens it happens in numbers. I can go two or three games without a sack, but once I get into the zone I just go, and I don't stop until the game is over.

IS: There will be a new rule in the NFL this season to protect the quarterback. The rule will allow quarterbacks under pressure outside the pocket to intentionally ground the ball without being penalized. What's your reaction to this?

DT: I don't think I could say that in print.

IS: But Schottenheimer, your own coach, is on the competition committee that recommended the rule.

DT: I'm pissed off with Marty about getting that rule through. [Laughs.] When are they going to stop? We all know when we go out there what we're going out there for and what the job entails. When are they going to stop? It not like quarterbacks are crushed outside the pocket. Hey, there's a sideline there. Run out of bounds.

IS: How many sacks would you have lost if the rule had been in place last season?

DT: About half of them. It's going to cost a lot of people sacks. I honestly think that rule will bring a lot of controversy. That's like pitching the ball to a running back and when he's about to be tackled, he can stop. Never mind this. They need to watch the offensive linemen and call some of the things they do to us pass-rushers. We're the ones who need some protection.

IS: You were a restricted free agent in the offseason. While you negotiated with the Detroit Lions and had a chance to solicit offers from other teams, you never signed an offer sheet. But you still received a huge contract from the Chiefs. What are your impressions of the new free-agency system?

DT: The system is good for some players who can move around and capitalize, but there are other players it's not good for because there are so many barriers put around them. The franchise players are screwed. Reggie White—God bless him—was the lone exception in the history of football. He was the only guy who will ever be that way.

IS: There were rumors you could have had an offer sheet from the Lions but didn't want to play there. Is that true?

DT: I liked the fact I could go to Detroit and do some new things, but I didn't want to break the bonds I have here. So, if I could get what I wanted or close to what I wanted and continue here, that's what I wanted. That was more meaningful to me than the search for the most money.

IS: You're probably the most dominant young defensive player in football. While you received a huge raise from the Chiefs, is it difficult to accept making almost \$1 million less than White?

DT: Reggie has been in the league many more years. When I've done this about eight years, I'll be looking for compensation where Reggie is. Right now, I accept my role in this system. There are three phases in football: You're a young player,

you're in your prime, and then you're on your way out. I'm just going into my prime.

IS: Do you consider yourself the premier defensive player in the league?

DT: I haven't learned about my position to where I can say I'm the best at my position. Physically, I would say I am. But knowing the game the way Lawrence Taylor or Andre Tippett knows it, I don't think I'm with them yet as far as techniques and fundamentals. Maybe I never will be, and maybe I'll do the things I want without that.

IS: Your father was killed in the Vietnam War. This past Memorial Day, you went to Washington, D.C., and visited the Vietnam Memorial for the first time, then made an emotional speech in the presence of President Clinton. What feelings did you have?

DT: I had mixed emotions. The wall has been there for years, and that was my first trip. I think it was so ironic I was asked to do it this particular year, to have my first sight of the wall and make a speech on Memorial Day. It was something I was finally ready for. I don't know why. But I was excited about having the opportunity to do it, and I was excited seeing my father's name on the wall. It was something special just to see the people and the feelings they had, how powerful this object actually is.

IS: There were a lot of protesters who resented President Clinton's appearance there, since he avoided the draft. Did you share their sentiment?

DT: I don't know where I truly stand on the issue, but I think anybody 19 years old, if they could have avoided going, they would have. At the same time, I understand how the other people felt because I lost my father, and I share those feelings. But I firmly think anybody given the opportunity not to fight in Vietnam would have elected not to go. From that standpoint, I think he was right in coming to the wall that day.

IS: Until recently many documents pertaining to MIAs remained classified. What's your opinion on that issue?

DT: I think Vietnam was a big scandal, a war we never intended to win.

IS: Are you completely convinced your father was killed in the war rather than merely abandoned by his country?

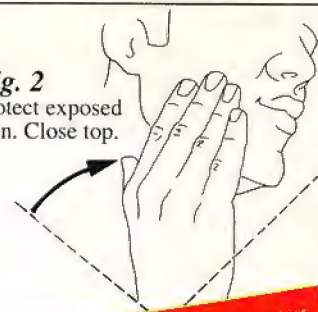
DT: I think I've accepted the fact my father won't return. But I always have a smidgen of hope one day he will. ■

ED WERDER does double duty this month with pieces on two of the NFL's brightest young stars. Check out Ed's profile of Troy Aikman elsewhere in this issue.

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Fig. 2 Protect exposed skin. Close top.



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Fig. 3 Start pedaling. Throw Canoe Sport over shoulder into saddle bag... yeah, right!



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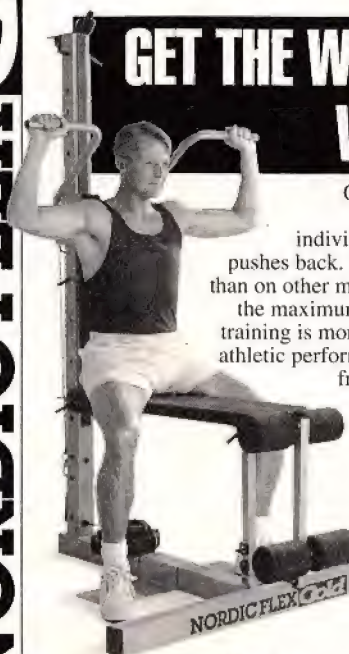
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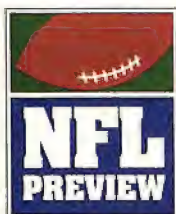
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Back to the Game

Troy Aikman must refocus on football after an offseason of adulation and injury

By ED WERDER



IN THIS SEASON OF unlimited potential and immense possibility, he competes with the inner opponent as much as the opposing defense. This year, Dallas Cowboys quar-

terback Troy Aikman contends only with himself.

His star has spiraled ever upward. With every Super Bowl snap his skill was underscored, his promise transformed into timely productivity. He wore eyeblick and a blank expression while becoming the youngest passer since Joe Montana in 1982 to be chosen the most valuable player of a Super Bowl. And now, of course, he will be held to a different standard for the remainder of his career. This could be harder than first-and-15, harder than 1-and-15.

Triumph has many temptations. There has been less time to prepare during this offseason. There were more appearance commitments to keep, more endorsement offers to consider, more contract renegotiation rhetoric to spew. "I think I've handled it fine," Aikman says with a dismissive shrug. "I still view myself the same way I always have. I've always placed pressure on myself to perform at a high level. I don't feel anybody can put higher expectations on me than I already have. Maybe because of the Super Bowl, people will come close to having the same expectations for me that I already have."

Brave words, but they were spoken before a weight-room injury in late spring ruptured a disk in Aikman's back. The ailment required surgery in mid-June, and the quarterback was expected to miss the start of training camp and most or all of the exhibition season. Doctors initially prescribed a 12-week recovery period, which would sideline Aikman until Week 3 of the regular season.

It was one more setback for a young player who's already come a long way. Four years ago Aikman was a confused rookie, a No. 1 overall draft pick who was unable to discern a zone defense from a zip code. Four years ago the Cowboys lost whenever he appeared in the starting lineup. Four years ago Aikman presided over endlessly flawed game days and hopelessly inept passing downs. Four years ago he had twice as many interceptions as touchdown passes, more concussions and chin lacerations than common sense. "This poor son of a bitch," says Cowboys assistant Joe Brodsky, "I saw him take so many hits early in his career that if I were him, I'd have given some of the money back and quit. I mean, god almighty, it was ugly." But four years later, he tops the depth chart of NFL superstars.

There were 85 to 100 calls per day this offseason to the Aikman Foundation, which schedules his appearances. "If we were not organized, we'd be institutionalized," says director Verna Riddles. Nike and Reebok have made offers to produce a line of signature shoes and promised national advertising campaigns. Pepsi and Coca-Cola also have competed for Aikman, and Nintendo has signed him to market a video game called "Troy Aikman's Pro Football." The blond-haired, blue-eyed Aikman has become a *GQ* coverboy, and his wholesome image has survived an appearance in *Playboy* as the subject of a lengthy interview. *People* magazine chose him one of its 50 most beautiful people.

Such is the dramatic impact of one transcendent football game. Aikman has condensed a career's worth of achievement into the space of four seasons. He is 26, sometimes confused and often incredulous about what has happened and what comes next. He knows the final score was Cowboys 52, Buffalo Bills 17, but he still can't comprehend the full picture. "This is

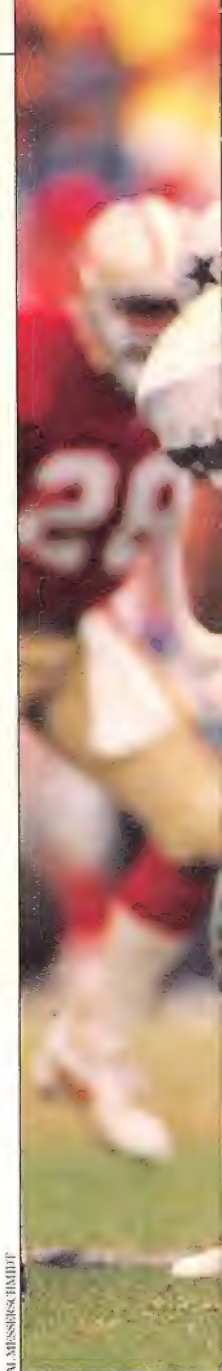
the way it's supposed to end," he says. "Guys spend their whole careers waiting to have it end like this, where they can go out on top and a winner and those things. I'm very fortunate that I got to achieve it and live it. Some guys haven't, and some guys never will."

"I still don't fully understand the scope of what we've done, but slowly I'm beginning to realize that I now have a place in history with some other quarterbacks. The last two seasons, even though I'd had success and was the second-rated passer in the league, I don't think people perceived me as one of the topnotch quarterbacks. It took the Super Bowl for me to break out of that image. I think opinions have changed, but for how long? Three months? The next interception? I don't know that. I don't know what the impact will be."

"I know a tremendous weight has been taken off my shoulders," Aikman adds, "because where I was drafted, this is what's expected. You're expected to win a Super Bowl. That's what it's all about. When a quarterback goes in the first round, it's about bringing a Super Bowl championship to the franchise. Now I feel I've accomplished what they drafted me to do. That's not going to make me complacent, but at least I've done that, and now I can move forward."

Aikman advanced the Cowboys down the field and through the playoffs without pause or interruption. He threw eight touchdown passes and no interceptions in the first three playoff starts of his career.

Now Aikman proceeds into this season knowing he will retire as another Roger Staubach rather than a Danny White, who merely set records in a place where championship rings are much preferred. "I think he's that good, to really be the premier quarterback of the '90s in the NFL," says Staubach, the quarterback of the '70s in Big D. "Aikman has really been a leader. He's a player other guys believe in, and he



AL MESSERS/IMMUT



brings them to another level. The pressure now is making sure you still pay the price to be the best, but Troy is the kind of guy who will continue to work hard. He really understands these opportunities are there for him because he's a great football player. He realizes he has to keep working out and continue to sweat with his teammates."

Actually, this happens to be the one time Aikman hopes not to be the second coming of St. Staubach. After Roger the Dodger was named the MVP of Super Bowl VI in January 1972, he separated his right shoulder in a preseason game later that year, lost his starting position to Craig Morton, and for the only time in his Hall-of-Fame career went through a regular season without completing a touchdown pass.

The fact is, only Starr and Terry Bradshaw have won consecutive Super Bowl

The franchise: Aikman should anchor Dallas' attack for the rest of the decade.

MVP awards. Last season the Washington Redskins' Mark Rypien offered a classic demonstration of how ephemeral success can be, how tenuous the grip on greatness. Rypien missed training camp in pursuit of a \$3 million contract and finished as the lowest-rated passer in the NFC with at least 224 attempts.

Aikman, of course, has more talent than Rypien and a much better team around him. But despite his competitive will, his uncompromising work ethic, and his overwhelming mental discipline, it would be unreasonable to assume he possibly could remain unaffected by the offseason carnival. Therefore, it's hardly shocking that there have been some broken plays along the way. The mostly innocent miscues

started almost before Leon Lett's infamous fumble stopped rolling.

First Aikman, who completed almost everything in the postseason, failed to complete the Pro Bowl and drew a \$10,000 fine from NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue for his third-quarter quarterback sneak from Aloha Stadium. Then he offered contradictory remarks about his interest in a pay hike.

He wants Cowboys owner Jerry Jones to renegotiate the final two years of a contract scheduled to pay him \$1.17 million this year and \$1.29 million in 1994. Denver's John Elway and Miami's Dan Marino, who have been to four Super Bowls between them but won none, are the league's highest-paid players at a reported \$4.775 mil-



Forget the records: Dallas loves a guy who wins rings.

lion and \$4.43 million, respectively, while Aikman's income is less than six backups will make this season. In March, intent on protecting his image as something other than an ordinary, run-of-the-mill conglomerate in a jockstrap, Aikman said: "It's totally up to Jerry. I would never initiate that conversation." But five weeks later, an impatient Aikman pressed the issue, saying he would play out his contract and attempt to become a free agent after the 1994 season unless a new agreement was in place before the upcoming season.

"Common sense says with free agency you're better off playing out the final year of a contract and testing the marketplace," Aikman says. "And with a salary cap coming next season, who knows? Maybe Jerry

meals four times a week.

"Contrary to what may have been written, I didn't look at the Super Bowl as a tool for me to promote myself for national endorsements," Aikman says. "I didn't have any aspirations. It wasn't a goal of mine. [But] because there's only so much attention that can be paid to certain players and everybody wants a piece of that, that sometimes causes problems. It will be interesting to see how we handle all of that."

Aikman has been a high-profile player since the Cowboys made him the first choice in the 1989 draft. He's had some experience with the spotlight, having been a highly visible performer at major programs at Oklahoma and UCLA, but

won't have enough money to pay me after '94. But some other team probably would." The remarks seemed unusual for Aikman, who seldom resorts to manipulation in the media. The next day he complained that the NFL Players Association "sold out" its constituency with the new collective bargaining agreement. So much for idol chatter.

Furthermore, the young star posed for six national magazines in one week during the offseason and has enjoyed high-profile relationships with actress Janine Turner and singer Lorrie Morgan; the latter made news after she took issue with suggestive remarks made by actress Cybill Shepherd when Shepherd and Aikman shared the stage as presenters at the Academy of Country Music Awards. And while Aikman was selective about accepting offers for appearances and endorsements, his hectic schedule sapped his energy and prompted him to hire a nutritionist to prepare his

Aikman seems too uncomfortable with his celebrity for it to consume him. "I'm very happy that it's Troy Aikman and not someone else," says Cowboys coach Jimmy Johnson, "because he handles the accolades and success as well as anyone I've been around."

Aikman had a career season as the Cowboys won the Super Bowl. His 31 touchdown passes in the regular season and playoffs matched the total from his first three seasons combined. Furthermore, he threw two or more touchdown passes in a game 11 times, which more than doubled his output of five in the first three seasons. In his final nine appearances last season Aikman had 20 touchdown passes and just three interceptions. In the playoffs he outplayed Philadelphia's Randall Cunningham, San Francisco's Steve Young, and Buffalo's Jim Kelly to become the highest-rated postseason passer in history—at least for now; his 116.7 career mark surpasses Bart Starr's 104.8.

Several factors contributed to these prodigious numbers. Aikman's incredible poise and passing talent played a part, and so did the Cowboys' phenomenal skill-position players, including two-time NFL rushing champion Emmitt Smith, wide receivers Michael Irvin and Alvin Harper, and tight end Jay Novacek. But Aikman has developed as a veteran player, and his maturation can be seen in such subtle nuances as varied snap counts that impede the pass rush, a heightened instinct for when to step forward in the pocket, and a growing ability to look off defenders and hit secondary receivers.

Aikman's improvement has followed a methodical, consistent curve. His quarterback rating and touchdown-to-interception ratio have improved in each of his four seasons. His rating advanced from 55.7 as a rookie to 66.6, then to 86.7 under offensive coordinator Norv Turner and reached 89.5 last year. His touchdown-to-interception ratio was 23-to-14 last season. In short, unlike Rypien—who was erratic through his first couple of years, reached a new level for one season, and then returned to his previous standard—Aikman's stardom hasn't come out of nowhere.

"I don't believe one game or one season makes a guy great," says ESPN's Joe Theismann, a former Redskins quarterback. "I'm not sure how good Mark Rypien is, but I've got a heck of a lot better feel and understanding for how good Troy Aikman is because he has continued to improve."

Aikman is unshakable in the pocket, and his release of the football is finger-snap



"You want to get to the Super Bowl, but once you've been there, you want to get back even more."

fast—he never pats the ball before throwing. "He's a great football player," says Stanford coach and former 49ers coach Bill Walsh. "The only thing I think could be a problem for Aikman is injuries. He tends to have injuries that affect his play, and he has a history of that, so you have to assume it will happen again."

It's a legitimate point. While Aikman started every game for the Cowboys last season for the first time in his career, he has missed 12 starts with injuries in previous seasons.

As long as he stays healthy, Aikman has little to prove, but the Cowboys offense maintains room for improvement. The fact that Dallas was limited to 17 or fewer points four times last season is often lost because the Cowboys produced almost 33 points per game the final eight games, but the record shows they often were challenged, four times winning by a touchdown or less.

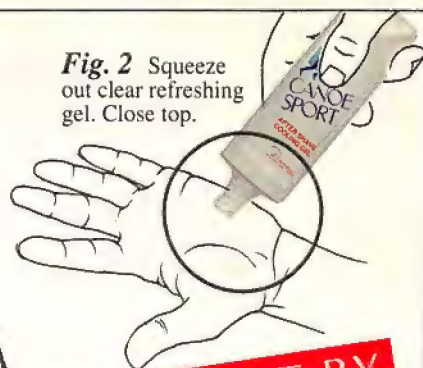
"I want to get [to the Super Bowl] again because of the special moments it creates in the course of a season and the memories involved with the game itself," Aikman says. "I have no aspirations to get to a Super Bowl solely so I can have another busy offseason. I've said it before: You want to get there, but once you've been to a Super Bowl you want to get back there even more." ■

We'd like to see ED WERDER back here in our pages again, too. Ed's lively interview with Cowboys wide receiver Michael Irvin ran in July.

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Fig. 2 Squeeze out clear refreshing gel. Close top.



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No Letdown in Big D

The Cowboys are young, talented, and—thanks to Jimmy Johnson—definitely not complacent

By GARY MYERS

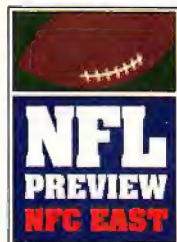
THE TINY TOWN OF JOE (DON'T CALL ME ISMAY), MONT., HAD BETTER prepare for Tinseltown, because Joe (Don't Call Me Washed Up) Montana is ready to guide the Kansas City Chiefs to Super Bowl XXVIII. Can the camera crews be far behind?

OK, call us crazy romantics. We know the Chiefs haven't climbed the Super stage in more than two decades. We know Christian (Ker-plunk) Okoye catches footballs as if they were hand grenades. We know no Chief will remind Montana of Jerry Rice, John Taylor, or Brent Jones. We know the linemen fit better in Jurassic Park than in a tap-dance competition. We know Joe's 'bow may go on any throw. But we think Montana has one final fling in that resurrected wing.

And we give bonus points to Marty Schottenheimer, whose football philosophy had been somewhere to the right of Rush Limbaugh, for scrapping everything to gamble on a new offense. It's an astonishing switch for a coach so stubborn he preferred to be fired by the Browns rather than change, a coach so successful he guided the Browns and Chiefs to seven consecutive winning seasons. Why change? "Because we're not playing in the Super Bowl, and that's where we want to be," Schottenheimer says. "Whether you finish second or 25th, you play for only one reason: to be No. 1. In our business, there's only one measure of success, and that's to win the Super Bowl."

In the NFC, the Green Bay Packers are a year away and the San Francisco 49ers a year past their prime, and neither they nor anyone else can challenge the supremacy of the Dallas Cowboys. Assuming Troy Aikman comes back strong after his back surgery, Dallas—young, hungry, and well-coached—should become only the second team to repeat as Super Bowl champion since the Pittsburgh Steelers did it a dozen years ago.

The idealist in us goes with Montana to get to the Super Bowl. The realist in us goes with Dallas to win it.



DALLAS COWBOYS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 13-3, first.

Player on the rise:

Alvin Harper gets overshadowed by Michael Irvin, but he's one of

the league's most acrobatic receivers. In the NFC title game against San Francisco he made an incredible sideline catch and then sealed the game by taking a simple slant 70 yards. Watch for bigger things this year.

Player on the decline: The Cowboys are so young, they have few players who have risen high enough to be on the way down, but since our bosses won't allow us to leave this space blank, we'll mention Charles Haley. From '88 to '90 Haley aver-

aged almost 13 sacks a season, then fell to seven in '91 and 6.5 in 1992. However, he still created a lot of pressure, and given a full camp with Dallas he could post big sack totals again.

Players on the move: Dallas is a nice place to play these days, so the Cowboys' worst free-agent losses were two backups. Kelvin Martin, an excellent return man and third receiver, will be replaced by second-round pick Kevin Williams. Hugh Millen will be an adequate replacement for Steve Beuerlein, who might have been the league's best backup quarterback but wasn't even needed last year, when Troy Aikman stayed

Even Randall can't run the '93 Eagles into contention.

Cowboys by the Numbers

How 'bout them Cowboys? They ranked No. 1 in rushing last season by grinding out 26 more yards per game than the previous year.

1992	Cowboys rushing: 132.6 yds.
	Opponents rushing: 77.8 yds.
1991	Cowboys rushing: 106.9 yds.
	Opponents rushing: 98.2 yds.

healthy and emerged as the league's best young QB. The Cowboys running game would be non-existent if they ever lost Emmitt Smith, which is why Jimmy Johnson talked with the Rams about his former Miami Hurricane, Cleveland Gary, and drafted Alabama's Derrick Lassie, who beat the Hurricanes in the national championship game with 135 yards and two touchdowns.

The bottom line: With the rest of the NFC East slipping, the Cowboys are the class of the division by far, the class of the league by a bit.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 10-6, second.

Player on the rise: Thanks to the departure of Gary Clark and the reduced role of Art Monk, Desmond Howard will get a chance to play this year. The 1991





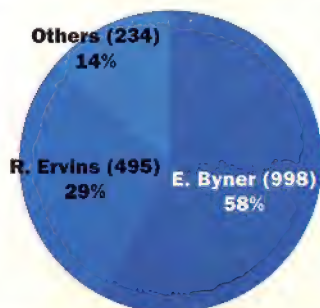
Dallas beheaded a tough 49ers club in '92 and will do the same this year.

Heisman Trophy winner made only three catches in his rookie NFL season, but mark it down: Howard will be a star.

Player on the decline: Based on last season, it has to be Mark Rypien, who went from Super Bowl MVP to the lowest-rated regular quarterback in the NFC. His touchdowns dropped from 28 to 13; his interceptions climbed from 11 to 17. His performance won't be dulled this year by a hold-out or too many banquet circuit appearances, but it's doubtful he'll ever be as good as he was in that Super season.

Redskins by the Numbers

Earnest Byner missed his fourth 1,000-yard season by six feet in '92, but he still was responsible for most of the Skins ground attack.



Players on the move: Cincinnati's Tim McGee signed on after Clark left for Phoenix. Bad tradeoff: McGee drops too many passes and makes too few big plays; Clark was tough, acrobatic, and the best of a good group of receivers. The addition of the Giants' Carl Banks all but assured Wilber Marshall's departure. Banks isn't as good a pass-rusher, but he's better against the run and in coverage. The Redskins couldn't afford Reggie White, but they did sign Al Noga, who'll be a better pass-rusher than the departed Fred Stokes. They'll replace overrated Martin Mayhew with brittle former reserve A.J. Johnson or No. 1 pick Tom Carter. No. 2 pick Reggie Brooks could be a real find at halfback, pushing Earnest Byner, who's fading, or Ricky Ervins, who's coming off a down year.

The bottom line: The Redskins should squeeze into the playoffs again, but that's about all.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 9-7, third.

Player on the rise: Fred Barnett has been overshadowed in the NFC by Jerry Rice, Michael Irvin, Andre Rison, and Sterling Sharpe, but in his third season he

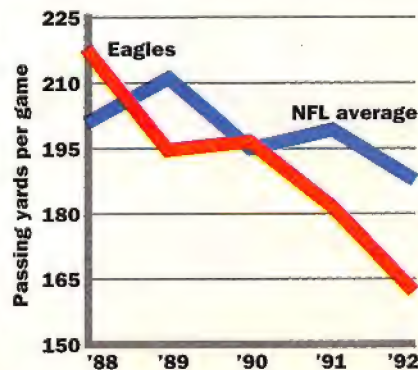
had 67 catches for 1,083 yards and six TDs. He's clearly Philly's most feared receiver.

Player on the decline: Perhaps you can excuse Randall Cunningham for last season's inconsistency and hesitancy because he was coming off major knee surgery. But if you watched his sometimes-shaky performances during the season and in the playoff loss to Dallas, you wonder if he's still an elite player.

Players on the move: Most of the roster. In the past year the Eagles have lost elite players (Keith Jackson, Reggie White,

Eagles by the Numbers

Randall didn't help the Eagles passing game much in '92. Philly fell from 20th in NFL passing in '91 to 23rd last season.



Jerome Brown), dependable starters (Ron Heller and Mike Golic), and part-time starters (Mike Pitts, Leon Seals, Jim McMahon, and John Booty). Keith Byars might be next, and the two best defenders remaining, Clyde Simmons and Seth Joyner, reportedly will be outta there after this season. Apparently relying on reports from the late '80s, Philly signed Mark Bavaro, an injury-riddled shell of his former Pro Bowl self; Erik McMillan, another New Yorker who's already seen his finest hours; and Keith Millard, who's couldn't cut it with the Seahawks or Packers. And finally, the Eagles signed Tim Harris, a terrific pass-rushing linebacker who'll be forced to masquerade as White's replacement at left defensive end, despite the fact that Harris has neither the size nor the inclination to stop the run.

The bottom line: This team is in freefall because owner Norman Braman, already raking in millions, has chosen to take the money and run. The Eagles might be able to sneak into the playoffs one last time, but only if Cunningham avoids last year's lows.

NEW YORK GIANTS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 8-8, fourth.

Player on the rise: Fullback Jarrod Bunch, who had an uneventful rookie season in '91, staged a coming-out party last year with 501 yards rushing on just 104 carries, a 4.8-yard average made even more impressive by the realization most of those yards came inside the tackles. A load at 6'2" and 248 pounds, he's the perfect complement to Rodney Hampton.

Player on the decline: Left corner Mark Collins was long one of the most underrated players at his position. But nobody stays underrated in New York, and so much was made of him he soon became a bit *overrated*. He didn't have a great '92, and this may be a crucial year for him.

Giants by the Numbers

The Giants finished fourth in rushing defense in '89 and '90 but slipped to 16th and 25th the last two seasons.

1991-92

Rushing defense: 116.9 yds.

Passing defense: 184.5 yds.

1989-90

Rushing defense: 93.7 yds.

Passing defense: 183.5 yds.



They'll hang in there, but the Jints won't drag down Smith and the Cowboys.

Players on the move: Lawrence Taylor—or what's left of him—is back, but the other former star outside linebacker, Carl Banks, departed for the rival Redskins, and the other top pass-rusher, Leonard Marshall (albeit with only four sacks), departed for the Jets. Mark Ingram also left, but two better receivers, Mike Sherrard and Mark Jackson, replace him. Carlton Bailey will help, but another free-agent linebacker, Michael Brooks, will help even more.

The bottom line: George Young, one of the league's most astute GMs, was smart to hire Dan Reeves as coach, even if he was the third choice after Tom Coughlin and Dave Wannstedt. Reeves will instantly command respect and hustle, but a big rebuilding job remains.

PHOENIX CARDINALS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 5-11, fifth.

Player on the rise: Randal Hill has magnificent speed, and though some still wonder about his head, his hands are just fine. He caught 58 balls for 861 yards last year with Chris Chandler and Timm Rosenbach throwing, and now with Steve Beuerlein he could really take off.

Player on the decline: Freddie Joe Nunn averaged nearly nine sacks a year the previous six years, but he fell off to four last year and also tore up his knee. At age 31, how far will he be able to come back?

Players on the move: Here's a new one: Cardinals management actually deserves some credit after decades as buf-

Cardinals by the Numbers

Phoenix's offense improved by nearly 40 yards per game last season and moved from a No. 27 to a No. 17 NFL ranking.

Total yards per game

Cardinals 1992: 286.1 yds.

Opponents 1992: 320.4 yds.

Cardinals 1991: 247.6 yds.

Opponents 1991: 315.8 yds.

foons. They went hard after Joe Montana and almost got him. Despite that setback, the Cards quickly signed the best free-agent quarterback, Beuerlein, and then drafted the running back that everyone wanted—Garrison Hearst—even though it cost them a decent back, Johnny Johnson, just to flip-flop spots with the Jets. Beuerlein, Hearst, and Gary Clark instantly upgrade the offense, and rookie linemen Ernest Dye and Ben Coleman will do so in time. The Cards did lose Danny Villa, a decent lineman, and Tim McDonald, maybe the league's best safety, but recouped somewhat by signing Pro Bowl safety Chuck Cecil.

The bottom line: The Cardinals should be better this year, but not enough to make it to .500—and probably not enough to save coach Joe Bugel's job.

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Reg-gie! Reg-gie!

The arrival of the NFL's premier defender is just the icing on the cake in Green Bay

By PAUL NEEDELL



GREEN BAY PACKERS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 10-6, first.

Player on the rise: Jackie Harris, in his fourth season out of Northeast Louisiana, is

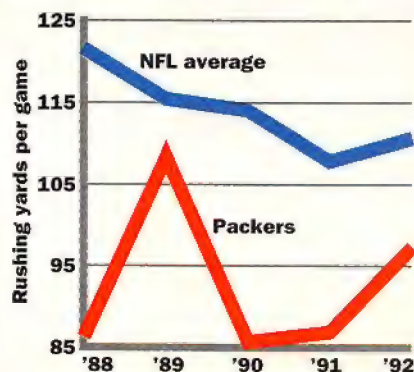
ready to be recognized as one of the league's top pass-catching tight ends. He caught 55 balls last season and should thrive in Mike Holmgren's system for years to come.

Players on the decline: Linebacker Johnny Holland led the team in tackles but is coming off major neck surgery. If he's not in decline, he's certainly a question mark. The other inside linebacker, Brian Noble, used to be one of the league's most underrated players, but he's coming off back problems.

Players on the move: The Packers won the biggest prize in free agency: Reggie White, a dominating presence as a pass-rusher, run stuffer, and leader. He's the only defensive player to average at least one sack per game during his NFL career, and he's worth all \$17 million. Bill Maas

Packers by the Numbers

The Pack may be back, but their ground game is in the back of the pack. They ranked 21st last year, averaging 97.2 yards a game.



has seen better days, but he'll help the defensive line, too. Green Bay lost one pass protector, Tootie Robbins, but added two in Harry Galbreath and Tunch Ilkin, who will form the new right side. If the Packers can coax another year out of Miami malcontent Mark Clayton, it'll take a lot of pressure off Sterling Sharpe, who's certain to draw more attention after a spectacular 1992 campaign. They replaced one decent running back, Vince Workman, with another, John Stephens, but lost a better safety, Chuck Cecil, than the one they signed, Mike Prior. First-round pick Wayne Simmons figures to line up over White's shoulder at left outside linebacker, and George Teague, another first-rounder, could start at right corner.

The bottom line: Holmgren and general manager Ron Wolf are making all the right moves. Who would've believed that the Packers would enter this season with a \$41 million payroll, easily the highest total in the league? Certainly that fact is a boost for team morale. The '92 Packers probably weren't as good as their 9-7 record indicated; they were in the bottom half of the league in virtually every statistic, especially on defense. However, Holmgren's offense is a thing of beauty—particularly when Brett Favre hooks up with Sharpe or Harris—and the defense has impact players in White, Tony Bennett, and Terrell Buckley. The Pack is on the rise in a mediocre division.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 9-7, second.

Player on the rise: At 6'1" and 270 pounds, fourth-year defensive tackle John Randle isn't the biggest guy around, but he's one of the fastest linemen in the league off the snap. Just ask the 21 quarterbacks he's taken to the turf in the past two seasons.

Player on the decline: Anthony Carter, once the big-play man on offense, caught only 41 passes for two touchdowns last season. Even if Carter's back, Jake Reed is likely to surpass his reception totals.

The Vikes may not win the Central, but it'll take more than the Pats to stop them.





ALLSPORT/ROCK STEWART

Favre has the Pack poised to capture its first division title since 1972.

Players on the move: Coach Dennis Green vacillated between quarterbacks Rich Gannon and Sean Salisbury last year, and the QB he cut, Wade Wilson, ended up playing better than both. The Vikings had a crying need, yet in a year when a lot of quality passers were available they settled for ex-Bear, ex-Charger, and ex-Eagle Jim McMahon, he of the brittle body and pop-gun arm. Any team that counts on McMahon might as well count itself out. The headband headache never has thrown

more than 15 touchdowns in a season, and that was back in 1985. In fact, he's managed to play 10 or more games only twice since that Super Bowl season. Minnesota lost two good offensive linemen—center Kirk Lowdermilk to the Colts and guard Brian Habib to the Broncos—and one good defensive end, Al Noga to the Redskins, in free agency and did nothing to replace them. The Vikes did add some multipurpose skill-position speed with their first two picks, running back Robert Smith and wide receiver/return specialist Qadry Ismail. Wideout Hassan Jones and Mike Merriweather probably won't be back.

The bottom line: Last year's 11-5 record was a mirage. Minnesota struggled in games against tough teams, going 1-4 during the regular season against playoff teams. McMahon can't get it done, particularly with slow receivers and a suddenly shaky line. The Vikings defense was spectacular last season—it was tops in the NFL in interceptions, No. 2 in takeaways, and No. 3 in yards allowed per play, and tied for third in sacks—but the offense must score some points on its own, and with Terry Allen the only real weapon, don't count on it.

Vikings by the Numbers

Dennis Green improved the Vikes' third-down efficiency from 39.6% in '91 to 44.3% last year, second-best in the conference.

Third-down efficiency

Vikings 1992: 44.3%

Opponents 1992: 38.2%

Vikings 1991: 39.6%

Opponents 1991: 45.1%

CHICAGO BEARS

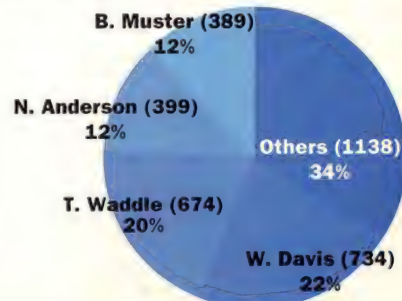
Predicted 1993 record, finish: 7-9, third.

Player on the rise: Left tackle Troy Auzenne, who was a breath of fresh air on the Bears' stale offensive line. Auzenne, a second-round pick out of California last year, was thrown right in against the league's top pass-rushers and not only held his own but actually dominated some games by season's end. A Pro Bowler in the making.

Player on the decline: Not long ago Neal Anderson was among the NFL's pre-

Bears by the Numbers

Jim Harbaugh spread the wealth around last season. No Bears receiver totaled more than 22% of the team's receiving yards.





AL MESSERS/EMIDT

If Peete can't stay healthy, he'll hand the job to Ware.

mier running backs, but his rushing totals have plummeted the past three years from 1,078 yards to 747 to 582. He's only 29, so maybe he can bounce back from leg injuries, but more than likely the pounding he took carrying a heavy workload has taken a toll he no longer can pay. Certainly the Bears will let newly acquired Craig (Ironhead) Heyward and third-year back Darren Lewis share some of the running load.

Players on the move: That's the Bears' problem: They don't have enough players who really *can* move. No. 1 choice Curtis Conway should give them the fleet feet Tom Waddle and Wendell Davis never had and the sure hands Anthony Morgan hasn't shown. He could be their best receiver as a rookie. In essence, the Bears swapped free-agent fullbacks with the Saints, securing Heyward and losing Brad Muster. Ironhead is a better blocker and short-yardage runner but less of a receiver. Newcomer Tony

Blaylock, who established himself as a quality cornerback for San Diego, should boost the secondary, and rookie Chris Gedney will give the Bears more help at tight end than James Thornton, who signed with the Jets, ever did.

The bottom line: Dave Wannstedt wants to mimic San Francisco's offense and Dallas' speed. Those are lofty ideals, and unless he can find someone stupid enough to give up for Anderson what the Vikings gave up for Herschel Walker, they won't be reached anytime soon. Wannstedt has inherited a slow, aging team, which is especially apparent along the formerly topnotch defensive line. Perhaps he can coax more out of quarterback Jim Harbaugh with a calmer, more relaxed approach than Iron Mike Ditka ever could with all his manic in-your-

face screaming, but the rookie coach can be thankful he resides in the same division with the Lions and the Buccaneers.

DETROIT LIONS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 6-10, fourth.

Player on the rise: Herman Moore has the whole package at wide receiver. A first-round pick in '91, he caught 51 passes for almost 1,000 yards last season. His 18.9-yard average was best among the NFC's top 10 players in receiving yards. He terrorizes short defensive backs with his height and leaping ability, big DBs with his speed. Just imagine what he'd do with a polished passer.

Player on the decline: Outside linebacker Michael Cofer, now 33, is coming off a knee injury and figures to be replaced by Pat Swilling. Cofer figures to play only in passing situations.

Players on the move: The Lions were

willing to give up a pair of first-round picks to sign Swilling as a free agent in 1992. The Saints matched their offer then, but a year later traded Swilling to the Lions for a No. 1 and No. 4 pick. He'll provide the QB pressure the Lions lacked. And three veteran linemen—Bill Fralic, Dave Lutz, and David Richards—will provide the escort service Barry Sanders has lacked. Rodney Holman used to be one of the league's best tight ends, and the Lions hope he'll have more to offer in a part-time role. Detroit lost a pretty good cornerback, Melvin Jenkins, to the Falcons, and traded talented but troublesome nose tackle Jerry Ball to the Browns. Ryan McNeil, an early second-round choice, will try to replace Jenkins.

The bottom line: It's hard to run a passing offense without a passer, and Andre Ware's inconsistency and Rodney Peete's repeated injuries have convinced the Lions to can the run-and-shoot and go to a more conventional one-back, four-receiver set. Sanders is the most elusive back in the game and should improve upon last year's 1,352 yards and nine touchdowns now that he'll be protected better. Moore and Brett Perriman are quality receivers, and their presence on the flanks should open things up for Sanders and the ground game. Return man Mel Gray remains the best in the business, and the linebackers, with the addition of Swilling, rank among the conference's finest, but the defensive line needed help even before Ball rolled away. The Lions will be dangerous team, especially at home in the Silverdome, but a playoff berth seems out of reach.

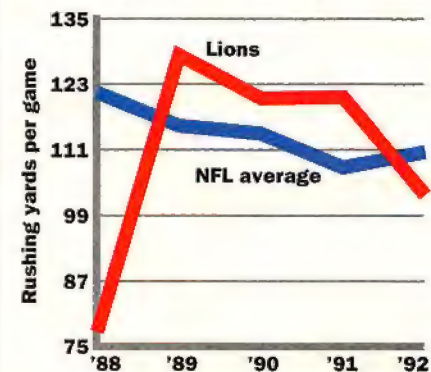
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 3-13, fifth.

Player on the rise: Reggie Cobb is entering his fourth year with his confidence soaring after gaining 1,171

Lions by the Numbers

When Barry Sanders joined the Lions in '89, Detroit's ground game soared. But the team rushing totals have fallen off since '89.



Buccaneers by the Numbers

The run defense was solid, but the Bucs' pass defense was a sieve, surrendering a league-high 219.4 yards per game.

Yards allowed per game

Bucs rushing: 104.7 yds.

NFL rushing: 110.5 yds.

Bucs passing: 219.4 yds.

NFL passing: 187.6 yds.

yards last season. If Sam Wyche can find a quarterback who can keep defenses from zeroing in on him, Cobb can pile up big numbers for a long time.

Player on the decline: After tying a team record with 174 tackles in 1991, right linebacker Broderick Thomas slacked off to a still-respectable 113 last year. At 26, he should be a rising star, and he might still be, but unless he makes a big attitude adjustment he could find himself playing elsewhere.

Players on the move: Middle linebacker Hardy Nickerson will solidify a spot that was woeful in '92, and No. 2 pick Demetrius DuBose can help either there or outside. The Buccaneers picked up two decent starters in fullback Vince Workman and cornerback Martin Mayhew and a potential pass-rushing star in No. 1 choice Eric Curry, who will allow Keith McCants to return to linebacker. But this is how bizarrely the bumbling Bucs continue to operate: They paid big bucks to lure 108-year-old Anthony Munoz, who used to be the finest left tackle ever, out of retirement, and by doing so needlessly alienated their best player, offensive lineman Paul Gruber, who hadn't missed a single down in his career.

The bottom line: Perennial disappointment Vinny Testaverde was shown the door and landed in Cleveland, but when the Steelers matched Tampa Bay's whopping offer sheet to the unremarkable Neil O'Donnell, the Bucs were left in a pickle and signed Mark Vlasic. Ugh. Unless Wyche suddenly proves himself to be the genius he thinks he is, Tampa Bay has the worst quarterbacking—Vlasic, Steve DeBerg, Craig Erickson, Mike Pawlawski—and the worst team in the league. The Buccaneers have lost 10 or more games for the past 10 years, and even though they reside in the worst division in the NFL, No. 11 is on deck.



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Second-Best Won't Cut It

The 49ers have been losing the big ones lately, and they want it to stop right now

By GARY MYERS



SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 12-4, first.

Player on the rise: Ricky Watters was a revelation in '92. He won the starting tail-

back job in training camp and then made the Pro Bowl with 1,013 yards, 43 catches, 11 touchdowns, and an impressive 4.9 yards per carry. He's an elusive yet powerful runner with 1,000-yard capability every year as long as he stays healthy, which has been a problem.

Player on the decline: Mike Cofer hit a whopping 80 field goals his first three seasons with the Niners, but he connected on only 14 of 28 in '91 and 18 of 27 last year. Any problems in training camp, and he could get kicked out of a job.

Players on the move: The 49ers didn't match Atlanta's offer to their fine defensive lineman, Pierce Holt, because they (1) didn't want to guarantee contracts and (2) thought they could use the money to buy Reggie White. They offered every dime they could to White, but Green Bay offered more, so they lost Holt and White. To make

matters worse, the Niners also lost their best pass-rusher, Tim Harris, to the Eagles. There still are some decent players up front, but no dominating ones. San Francisco did, however, sign Tim McDonald, who might be the league's best

safety, finally filling the void left by Ronnie Lott. Joe Montana, of course, is gone, but the 49ers have gotten along fine without him the past two years—at least until Steve Young's playoff struggles last year. San Francisco lost out when it picked up Mervyn Fernandez to replace third receiver Mike Sherrard.

The bottom line: The offense should be its usual potent self, but without a dominating pass-rusher the defense figures to fall deep into mediocrity. After making it to the NFC title game two of the past three years, San Francisco might struggle to make it that far this year.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 9-7, second.

Player on the rise: Vaughn Dunbar led the Saints in rushing as a rookie and with enough carries has a chance to be very

The emergence of Watters as an all-around back re-energized the Niners attack.



49ers by the Numbers

Stats can deceive: The 49ers ranked 26th in pass defense mainly because their opponents let loose a league-high 551 attempts.

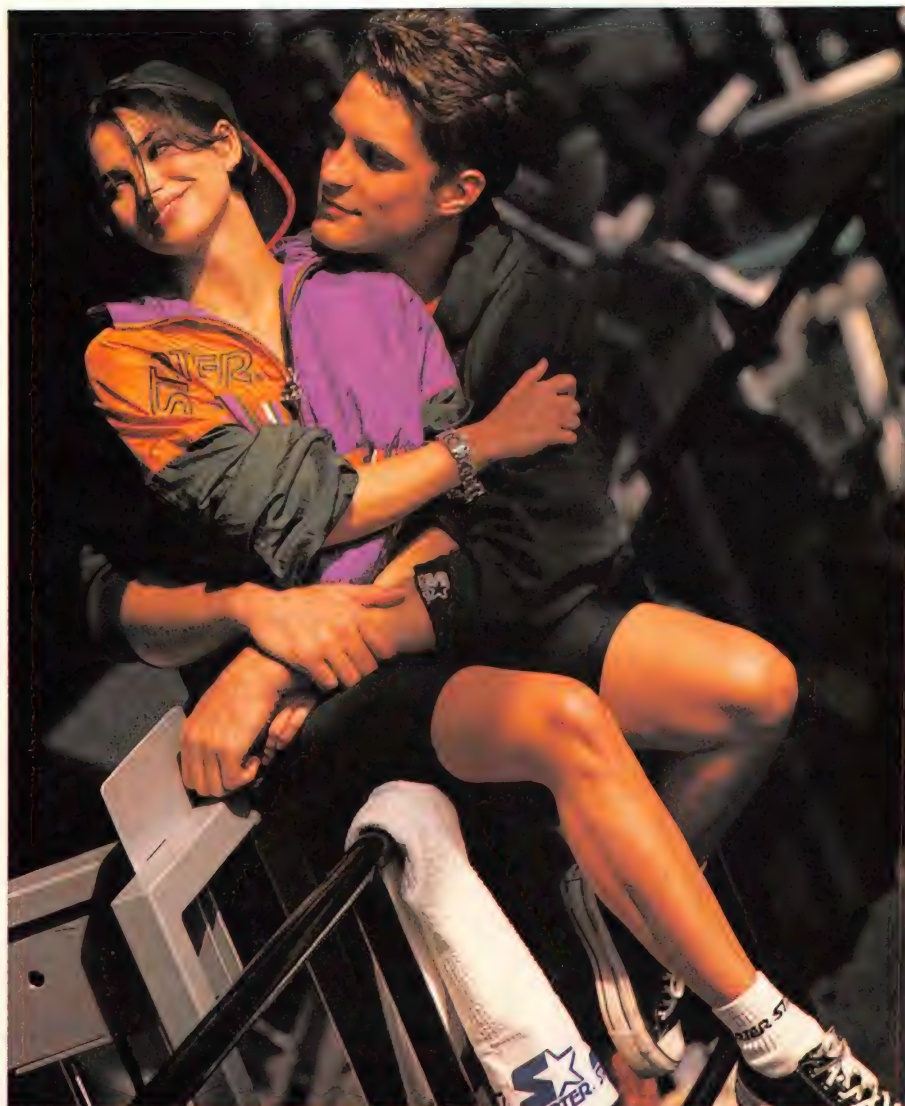
49ers rushing: 88.6 yds.

NFL rushing: 110.5 yds.

49ers passing: 210.6 yds.

NFL passing: 187.6 yds.

Yards allowed per game



KAREN DUFFY • CHRISTIAN LAETTNER

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FOCUS ON SPORTS

When it comes to the top NFL receivers, Andre's risin'.

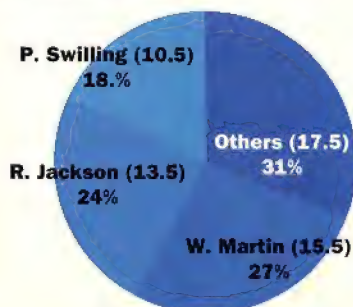
good. Dunbar could double last year's 565-yard total.

Player on the decline: Steve Walsh. The Saints gave up picks in the first three rounds three years ago for the University of Miami QB, only to find out all those whispers about his lack of arm strength were true. Walsh sank to third on the depth chart last year, and when the Saints didn't re-sign Bobby Hebert, they went out and obtained journeyman Wade Wilson to compete with Walsh and Mike Buck.

Players on the move: Hebert made exasperating and painful mistakes at key moments in big games, but he was still a better QB than Wilson ever was, save for Wilson's glorious finish with the Falcons last year. Wilson's never had a streak as hot as that—and he never will again, now that he's no longer throwing to Andre Rison, Mike Pritchard, and Michael Haynes. The Saints also made a free-agent swap of fullbacks, replacing Ironhead Heyward with Brad Muster, and veteran right tackles, replacing Stan Brock with Tootie Robbins until 1993 No. 1 Willie Roaf is ready. And, of course, New Orleans traded Pat Swilling to the Lions and must hope former No. 1 Renaldo Turnbull can replace him. Rookie

Saints by the Numbers

The Saints linebackers get a lot of ink, but defensive end Wayne Martin was the team's No. 1 sacker a year ago.



Irv Smith should instantly upgrade the team at tight end.

The bottom line: The Saints offense needs more imagination, aggressiveness, and firepower if it is to make up for an aging defense's inevitable decline, but with Jim Mora and whoever at the controls—and management keeping the payroll near the bottom of the

league—that's unlikely.

ATLANTA FALCONS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 6-10, third.

Player on the rise: Mike Pritchard was a wingback at Colorado, and though scouts loved his athleticism, many thought it would take a lot of polish before he'd become a productive pro. Never mind. Pritchard had 50 catches as a rookie, then exploded for 77 catches last year.

Player on the decline: Free safety Scott Case didn't have many steps to lose, and not only has he lost one, but he slides off too many tackles. Maybe he'll be helped—or replaced—by veteran Alton Montgomery or rookie Roger Harper.

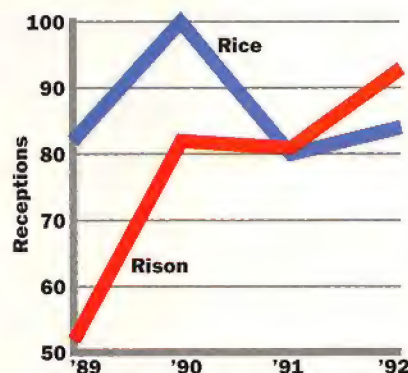
Players on the move: The Falcons traded for Montgomery and drafted Harper to improve their slowpoke safeties. They traded for Vinnie Clark and signed free

agent Melvin Jenkins to improve themselves at cornerback, where Tim McKyer talked himself out of a job and Deion Sanders is a part-time player. But the biggest help defensively might come up front, where Pierce Holt is one of the league's best two-way players and Jumpy Geathers is a decent pass-rusher. Unfortunately, free agency cost the Falcons last year's starting guards, Houston Hoover and Bill Fralic; but they might handle those losses with their past two No. 1 choices, Bob Whitfield and Lincoln Kennedy. Quarterback Bobby Hebert is likely to start the season behind Chris Miller, but if Miller gets hurt as he tends to do, the Falcons will have a pretty good QB to make their version of the run-and-shoot go.

The bottom line: The offseason moves should go a long way toward improving a pathetic defense, and the passing offense

Falcons by the Numbers

Over the last three seasons Andre Rison has only caught seven fewer passes (264-257) than the 49ers' Jerry Rice.



When Everett struggles, the whole Rams offense turns into sheep.



RECK STEWART/ALLSPORT

Rams by the Numbers

After limiting teams to 103.7 rushing yards per game in '91, the Rams surrendered 139.4 per game (4.8 per carry) in '92.

Rushing yds. allowed per game

Rams 1992: 139.4 yds.

NFL average 1992: 110.5 yds.

Rams 1991: 103.7 yds.

NFL average 1991: 107.7 yds.

again should be one of the NFL's most explosive, but unless Jerry Glanville gets his act together, this could be his last act.

LOS ANGELES RAMS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 5-11, fourth.

Player on the rise: Sean Gilbert has a shot at becoming a dominant defensive tackle. He's just 23 years old and is coming off a productive rookie season. The Rams have been looking for his type of talent since Deacon Jones and Merlin Olsen called it quits.

Players on the decline: The wide receiver tandem of Henry Ellard and Flipper Anderson used to be one of the most feared in the business, but Jim Everett's inconsistency has put a dent in its productivity. The two combined for 85 catches last season, which used to be a good year for Ellard alone.

Players on the move: The heretofore skinflint Rams were surprisingly aggressive in free agency, spending big bucks to lure Shane Conlan and Fred Stokes to help out the defense and tackle Irv Eatman to replace Gerald Perry, who left for the Raiders. Leading sacker Kevin Greene, feeling out of place in a 4-3 defense, left for the Steelers, but the Rams added two starters, Chris Martin of the Chiefs and Henry Rolling of the Chargers, to replace him. They obtained Leo Goeas to replace free agent guard Joe Milinichik. Rookie Troy Drayton could start at tight end, No. 1 Jerome Bettis could be a star fullback, and No. 3 Russell White could be a steal at halfback.

The bottom line: Jim Everett can go on incredible hot streaks when he has time to throw, but he won't get it often enough with an offensive line that isn't as good as it used to be. The Rams should be better, but they'll stay a step behind the 49ers and Saints.

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No, Please, Not Again!

The Bills are the best in the East, but they won't have to worry about losing another Super Bowl

By STEVE HUBBARD



BUFFALO BILLS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 12-4, first.

Players on the rise: It's a tie between two players entering their third year, defensive end Phil Hansen

and safety Henry Jones. Jones tied for the league lead in interceptions with eight and went to the Pro Bowl, and Hansen—who had eight sacks last year and dominated with huge plays in the postseason—might join him in Hawaii this year.

Player on the decline: Jim Ritcher, a 35-year-old guard who's starting to fade after playing 13 years and a team-record 207 games. "Guys around here talk about being in junior high school in the '80s," Ritcher says. "I'll talk about the day Kennedy got shot, and they want to know what happened to Ted Kennedy."

Players on the move: When inside linebacker Carlton Bailey went to the Giants, it wasn't a huge loss; Cornelius Bennett already had moved inside to put him on the bench. But when the Bills lost their other inside backer, Shane Conlan, that hurt. Conlan isn't as good as his reputation—he's hurt too often and exits on

passing downs—but he was the Bills' best run stuffer. Still, the biggest loss is Will Wolford, one of the league's best left tackles. Not only is Wolford no longer around to protect the blind side of the aging, ever-slower Jim Kelly, but he joined the fast-closing Colts. Free-agent addition Billy Brooks probably will catch more balls than James Lofton but won't break as many big plays.

The bottom line: The Bills still have more talent than anyone else in the AFC East, but the Dolphins are close, and the Colts are catching up quickly.

MIAMI DOLPHINS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 10-6, second.

Players on the rise: It's a tossup among three young defenders. Bryan Cox, a starter in only his second season, emerged as one of the league's nastiest pass-rushers. Marco Coleman and Troy Vincent, in their rookie seasons, improved the defense tremendously and starred in the playoffs.

Player on the decline: The Marks Brothers, Clayton and Duper, plunged

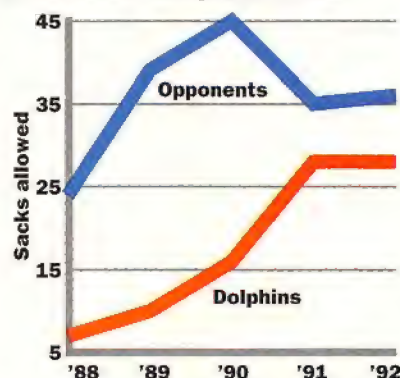
from a combined 140 catches, 2,138 yards, and 17 touchdowns in 1991 to 87, 1,381, and 10 in 1992. Clayton's now with the Packers, and Duper probably will be a backup if he sticks around.

Players on the move: Clayton wasn't a big loss—he'd become a mouthy malcontent and had lost the extra step that made him Dan Marino's favorite TD target. He'll be more than ably replaced by Irving Fryar, Mark Ingram, and No. 1 choice O.J. McDuffie. The Dolphins signed a tenacious tackle, Ron Heller, to improve the right side of their offensive line, but they haven't replaced a quality guard, Harry Galbreath. Mike Golic will help the interior defense, and rookie Terry Kirby must come through because backs Tony Paige and Bobby Humphrey probably will be gone. McDuffie will improve a poor return game.

The bottom line: The '92 Dolphins won six games in the fourth quarter, three on last-second field goals by Pete Stoyanovich; as good as Marino and Stoyanovich are,

Dolphins by the Numbers

Five seasons ago Dan Marino was sacked just seven times. Now he hits the turf almost as much as the average quarterback.



Bills by the Numbers

Thurman Thomas just keeps getting better. Both his rushing and receiving numbers have increased during the past two years.

Rushing

T. Thomas 1991-92: 2894 yds.

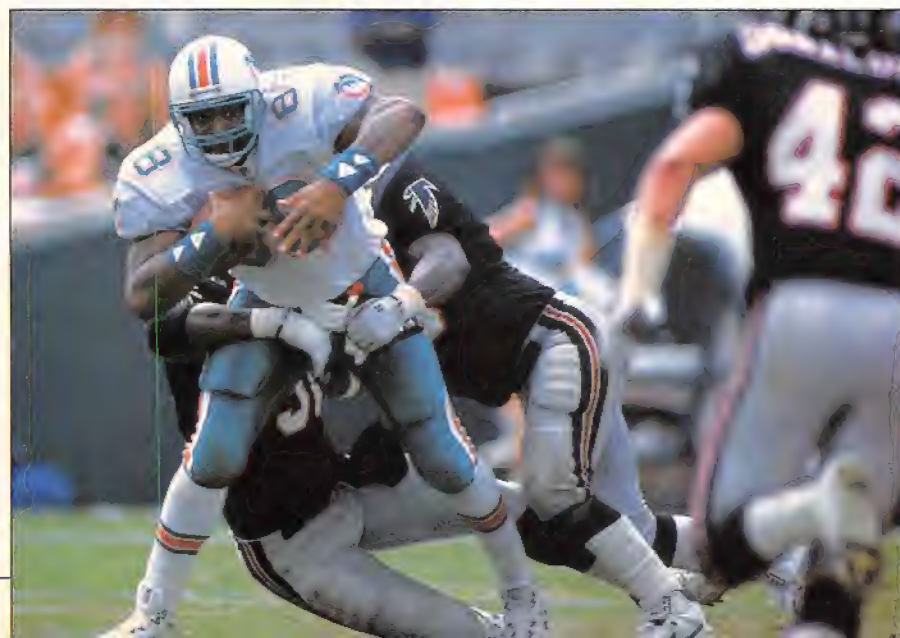
T. Thomas 1989-90: 2541 yds.

Receiving

T. Thomas 1991-92: 1257 yds.

T. Thomas 1989-90: 1201 yds.

Jackson won't have to carry Miami's attack by himself—but he probably could.





Kenneth Davis and the Bills should outrun Miami in the division, but they're no longer the cream of the conference.

Miami can't count on late heroics every year.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 8-8, third.

Players on the rise: The '92 Colts became the first team in more than three decades to select the first two players in the draft, and they found two winners in defensive lineman Steve Emtman and linebacker Quentin Coryatt, whose tenacity matches their talent.

Player on the decline: Dean Biasucci connected on 79% of his field goals from 1987 through 1990 but only 56% the past two years. You don't win many close games with that kind of "accuracy."

Players on the move: Two high-priced free agents, center Kirk Lowdermilk and left tackle Will Wolford, will vastly upgrade

an offensive line that has been a non-running joke. However, Wolford has a shoulder problem that probably will sideline him at season's start. Indy's best possession

receiver, Billy Brooks, signed with Buffalo, but the Colts hope No. 1 pick Sean Dawkins can be a big-play receiver despite a lack of flat-out speed.

The bottom line: The Colts have a young and improving nucleus, but even coach Ted Marchibroda admits they need more talent before they can challenge the Bills and Dolphins.

Colts by the Numbers

The Colts have ranked 28th—dead last—in rushing in '91 and '92, and 28th and 26th in rushing defense during the same span.

1992
1991

Colts rushing: 68.9 yds.

Opponents rushing: 135.9 yds.

Colts rushing: 73.1 yds.

Opponents rushing: 145.4 yds.

NEW YORK JETS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 6-10, fourth.

Player on the rise: Tight end Johnny Mitchell has great athletic ability but rarely displayed it during a 16-catch rookie season. However, plays like his 37-yard TD against Miami—when he broke three tackles and faked out two other defenders—get everyone excited about his potential.

Player on the decline: The Jets traded



Read our lips: George has promise, but he's got to get the job done in '93.

for a fading, high-priced quarterback, former Bengal Boomer Esiason, hoping he could repeat his glory years when Jets coach Bruce Coslet was his coordinator at Cincinnati. Forget about it. Coslet says Boomer got into some bad habits, tried to do too much, and didn't have enough help around him. More likely, Boomer's arm is dying, and New York won't be the Fountain of Youth.

Players on the move: The Jets paid big bucks for past-their-prime players such as Esiason, Ronnie Lott, Leonard Marshall, and Eric Thomas. Those guys might be able to teach the Jets' many underachievers what it takes to win, but they don't have enough left to actually make the Jets winners. At least the Jets lost no one of significance in free agency and fared well on draft day, getting an impact linebacker (Marvin Jones), a former star running back (Johnny Johnson), and two potential star

running backs (Adrian Murrell and Richie Anderson).

The bottom line: "Teams that go a long way have three or four dominating players or upper-echelon players on both sides of the ball," says GM Dick Steinberg. "We either need some of our guys to develop into those kinds of players, or we need to get them [from] someplace else." Or else Coslet and maybe even Steinberg might not be around much longer, either.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 4-12, fifth.

Player on the rise: Vincent Brown, a big and nasty run-stuffing linebacker, has led the team in tackles the past two years and would be a shoo-in for the Pro Bowl if he made more big plays or the Patriots won more games. He'd better work on the big plays.

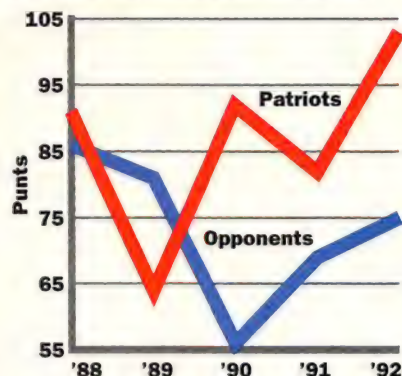
Player on the decline: Andre Tippett doesn't ring up double-digit sack totals anymore, but he still had seven of the Pats' paltry 20 sacks last year. However, he played only in spurts, and he'll be 34 this year.

Players on the move: Just about all of them. Either new coach Bill Parcells has a mandate to change or stock in

Marv Cook will have to wait a bit before he sees any passes from Bledsoe.

Patriots by the Numbers

The Pats punt more often than any team. In the last five seasons they've led the AFC three times and finished second last year.

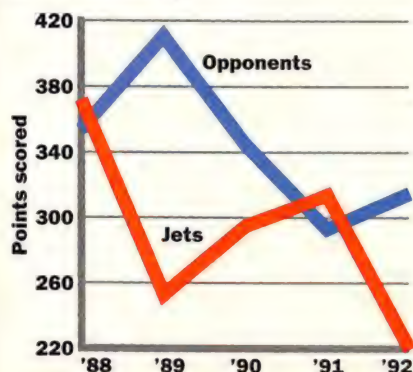


Mayflower van lines. Parcells signed a slew of free agents, but not many are any good. Bill Lewis and Steve Trapilo should upgrade what was a woeful line, but Scott Secules is mostly a warm body until the draft's first choice, Drew Bledsoe, is ready to start at quarterback. Bledsoe is the club's future, so Parcells won't get him killed in what will be another throwaway season. Parcells dumped a better QB than Secules, Hugh Millen, and traded two of his better players, Irving Fryar and John Stephens.

The bottom line: Don't look for good news anytime soon.

Jets by the Numbers

The Jets offense plummeted to new depths last season, while their defense remained mired in mediocrity.



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The Clock Is Ticking

Houston has the talent—now the Oilers have to get the job done before they get too old

By STEVE HUBBARD



HOUSTON OILERS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 11-5, first.

Player on the rise: David Williams is emerging as a quality right tackle, following Mike Munchak and

Bruce Matthews in the tradition of fine Oilers linemen. The Oilers can only hope that another No. 1 pick, Brad Hopkins, can join them as a rookie starter at left tackle.

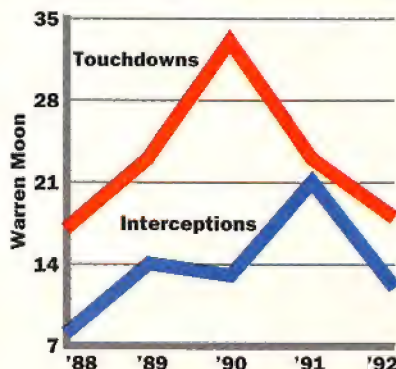
Player on the decline: Munchak has gone to eight Pro Bowls, but he's getting old and breaking down.

Players on the move: The Oilers lost a decent left tackle, Don Maggs, necessitating Hopkins' addition. Former Pro Bowl cornerback Jerry Gray didn't fit the blitzing style of new defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan and was released. Before camp ends, many more moves are likely among players who are disgruntled (Ray Childress, Sean Jones), in Ryan's doghouse (Lamar Lathon), or unsigned (Al Smith, Ernest Givins, Lorenzo White).

The bottom line: The Oilers must quit complaining—and quit quitting. They're

Oilers by the Numbers

An injury kept Warren Moon from reaching his normal TD numbers in '92, but over the last five years his TD-int. ratio impresses.



getting old, and if their best shot at the Super Bowl hasn't passed already, it almost certainly will if they don't make it this year.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 10-6, second.

Player on the rise: Barry Foster rose about as far as possible last year, and he won't surprise anyone this year. But last year's No. 1 pick, Leon Searcy, could. He's a big, nasty right tackle who spent last year apprenticing under Tunch Ilkin before the master left for the Packers.

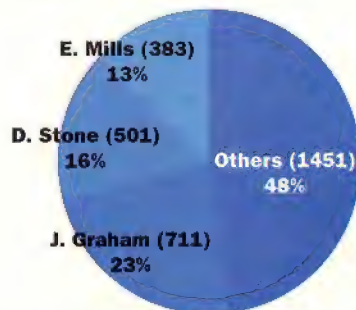
Player on the decline: The Steelers cleaned out a couple of underachieving No.

1 choices last year, and unless Tim Worley and Eric Green—who have wasted their talents with sloth, injuries, and drugs—clean up their acts, they could be next.

Players on the move: The Steelers lost a promising young pass-rusher in linebacker Jerrol Williams but got a proven one in linebacker Kevin Greene. They waited until the last moment to match Tampa Bay's whopping offer sheet for their starting quarterback, Neil O'Donnell, and then held on to him even when the Bucs offered a No. 1 pick that could have been the pass-rushing end the Steelers so sorely need. Instead of having Bubba Brister at QB and

Steelers by the Numbers

They're not Swann and Stallworth, but the Steelers' Jeff Graham and Dwight Stone produced decent numbers last season.



In '92 the Steelers handed off to Foster, and he carried them to the playoffs.





Houston's scoring juggernaut rolls on, but the defense has to hold up its end.

Eric Curry at DE, they kept O'Donnell and waived Brister, a decent player whose mouth got him in trouble. Ilkin is just about done and would have been no more than a backup. Alleged sackmeister Aaron Jones signed with New England, but the Steelers will lose a lot more penalties than sacks. Louis Lipps is back, but he's still washed up.

The bottom line: The resolution of Foster's annual holdout could well determine the won-lost record; the Steelers can't seem to live with their star running back, and they can't win without him.

CLEVELAND BROWNS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 8-8, third.

Player on the rise: Free safety Eric Turner—if he can stay healthy. He missed eight games as a rookie and still had 84 tackles, then missed three more starts last year and still had 119. If he puts it all together, he'll start collecting interceptions in bunches, too.

Player on the decline: Quarterback Bernie Kosar—because he can't stay healthy. Only 29, Kosar has taken so much abuse to his arm, elbow, and legs that he

doesn't have nearly the power or touch he once had on his throws, and his ability to escape the rush, always minimal, now is virtually non-existent.

Players on the move: The Browns were active in free agency, obtaining three decent starters—wideout Mark Carrier, guard Houston Hoover, and cornerback Najee Mustafaa—plus the much-maligned Vinny Testaverde as insurance for Kosar. The only player of significance they lost was Mark Bavaro, the only NFL-caliber tight end on the roster. The Browns hope No. 1 pick Steve Everitt can fill a big hole in the offensive line. Cleveland traded for nose tackle Jerry Ball, who can stuff the



He's been crunched mercilessly, but Kosar still is the best the Browns have.

middle as well as anyone when he's not stuffing his face or complaining about his contract, which isn't often.

The bottom line: If Bill Belichick doesn't take the mute button off his mouth and his offense, then owner Art Modell will have to keep his vow to sell the club if the Browns don't become a top-echelon team under his hand-picked coach.

CINCINNATI BENGALS

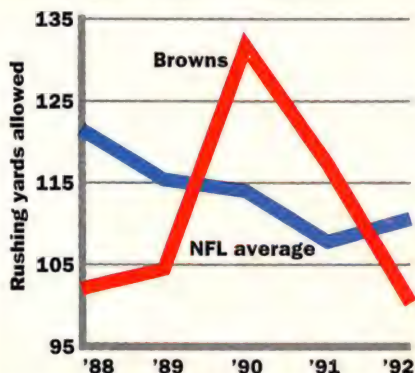
Predicted 1993 record, finish: 3-13, fourth.

Player on the rise: Carl Pickens was the NFL offensive rookie of the year. It wasn't a particularly good year for offensive rookies, and Pickens only scratched at his potential, but he did catch 26 passes and average 12.7 yards per punt return. He has the talent to be a perennial Pro Bowler.

Player on the decline: Tim Krumrie.

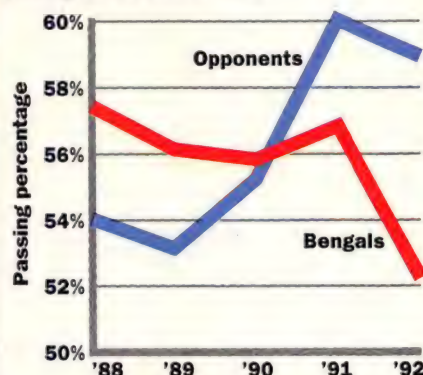
Browns by the Numbers

Since Bill Belichick arrived as head coach, the Browns have made a big improvement in rushing defense. Any coincidence?



Bengals by the Numbers

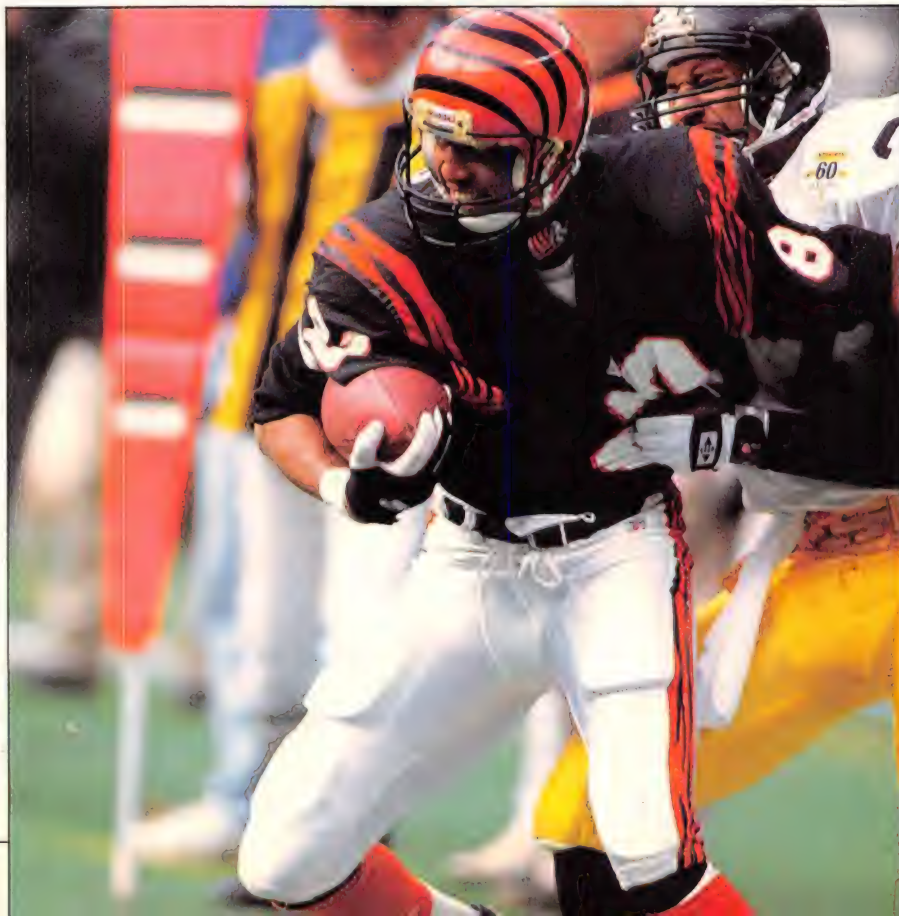
Since '88 the Bengals' passing percentage has gone south while the opposition has been flirting with the 60% mark.



departure creates a yawning hole for the Bengals at left tackle. Eric Thomas signed with the Jets; Cincinnati signed two marginal cornerbacks, Michael Brim and Sheldon White, to fill in. Wideout Tim McGee signed with the Skins and tight end Rodney Holman with the Lions, but as poorly as they played, that was good news.

The bottom line: The Bengals are in for a never-ending rebuilding process unless they start shelling out some bucks to keep their established players and find some others. They show no willingness to do so.

It'll take more than Pickens' pass-catching skills to pull Cincy into the picture.



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Welcome to Joe's Joint

Joe Montana and his healthy elbow have turned the Chiefs into Super Bowl contenders

By STEVE HUBBARD



KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 11-5, first.

Player on the rise: Dale Carter is a big-time playmaker. The rookie cornerback

intercepted seven passes last year, even though he split his time between the starting lineup and nickel-back duty. He scored three times on interceptions and punt returns, and finished seventh in punt-return average.

Player on the decline: Christian Okoye ran for 1,480 yards in 1989 and 1,031 in 1991, with a combined 4.2 yards-per-carry average, but fell off to 448 yards and a 3.1 average last year. The Nigerian Nightmare will be 32 in August and will be asked to become a blocker and receiver when his only real talent is as a featured runner between the tackles.

Players on the move: The trade for Joe Montana finally gives the Chiefs the topnotch quarterback they've needed to go beyond merely making the playoffs. David Whitmore, also acquired in that 49ers deal, could start at strong safety. Marcus Allen is no longer a feature back, but he gives the

Chiefs the all-purpose running back Okoye and Barry Word were either unable or unwilling to be. Lineman David Lutz was lost in free agency, but Danny Villa was added, and he better fits the new offensive scheme. Bill Maas also was lost, but Dino Hackett returns after losing a season to injury.

The bottom line: It takes time to learn a new scheme and its terminology, and the Chiefs don't have all the personnel to make the new offense click immediately, but if Montana and halfback Harvey Williams stay healthy—admittedly big ifs—the Chiefs should be a force by playoff time.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 10-6, second.

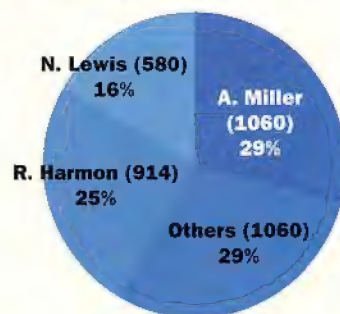
Player on the rise: Junior Seau. As good as his 1992 statistics are, they only hint at his effect on a game. He and Seattle's Cortez Kennedy might have been the biggest defensive impact players in the league last year, and Seau was only 23. Amazing.

Player on the decline: Nobody, really. This is a very young team. Only cornerback Gill Byrd has more than 10 years of experience, and though he might have slowed a trace, he was an All-Pro and a Pro Bowl starter.

Players on the move: GM Bobby Beathard has assembled a talented young team, one that got a tiny bit better with every response to a free-agent departure. Guard David Richards was replaced by for-

Chargers by the Numbers

One of the premier deep threats in the NFL, Anthony Miller represented 29% of the Chargers passing attack a year ago.

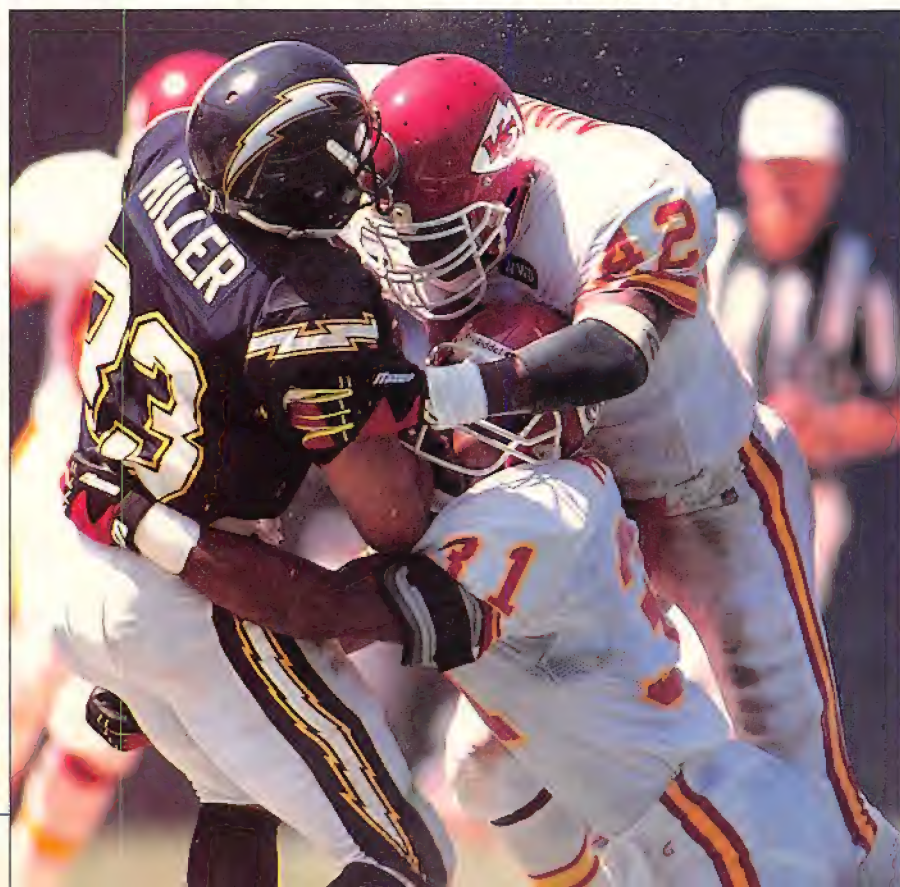


Chiefs by the Numbers

The Chiefs running attack ranked third in the NFL in '91 but plummeted to a No. 23 ranking last season.

1992	Chiefs rushing: 95.8 yds.
	Opponents rushing: 111.7 yds.
1991	Chiefs rushing: 138.6 yds.
	Opponents rushing 110.6 yds.

The Chargers can forget it: This year the Chiefs say they're going nowhere.





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The Broncos hope to get at least one more season out of him.

Players on the move: The Broncos struck boldly in free agency and sent line-men's salaries soaring when they signed the Oilers' Don Maggs and the Vikings' Brian Habib. Those two will anchor the left side of the line. Rod Bernstine was lured from San Diego, and as long as he's healthy—which usually isn't long—he should put up good numbers as a runner and big numbers as a receiver. But former Broncos coach Dan Reeves lured possession receiver Mark Jackson and, more importantly, Pro Bowl linebacker Michael Brooks to the Giants.

The bottom line: The Broncos laugh off the notion that John Elway isn't enough of a touch passer to operate a 49ers-style system, but have our eyes deceived us for the past decade?

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 7-9, fourth.

Player on the rise: Anthony Smith, L.A.'s No. 1 pick in 1990, led the team with 13 sacks and six forced fumbles despite playing only on passing downs. If he can become a force against the run, too, watch out.

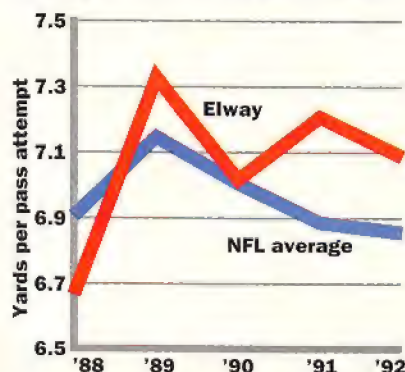
Players on the decline: Take your pick: This season Vince Evans will be 38, Max Montoya and James Lofton 37, Jeff Gossett 36, Steve Wright 34, Howie Long, Willie Gault, and Lionel Washington 33,

Okoye's still a heavy-duty punisher, but he may play a diminished role in '93.

mer Ram Joe Milinichik, tackle Broderick Thompson by the Saints' Stan Brock. Linebacker Henry Rolling was replaced by the Steelers' Jerrol Williams, cornerback Tony Blaylock by No. 1 choice Darrien Gordon. Rod Bernstine was replaced when Beathard traded away his '94 No. 1 to move up in the second round for Natrone Means.

Broncos by the Numbers

He may be one of the best QBs ever in the clutch, but John Elway's yards-per-pass-attempt figures are no more than ordinary.



That was Beathard's only debatable move. He already was blessed with backs, and last time he gave away his No. 1 for a No. 2, he got Eric Moten and the Redskins got Desmond Howard.

The bottom line: The Chargers need another receiver, but mostly they need quarterback Stan Humphries to prove he's the real deal. They could repeat as division champions if K.C.'s offense doesn't click, but against a first-place schedule their record probably won't show the improvement they'll make.

DENVER BRONCOS

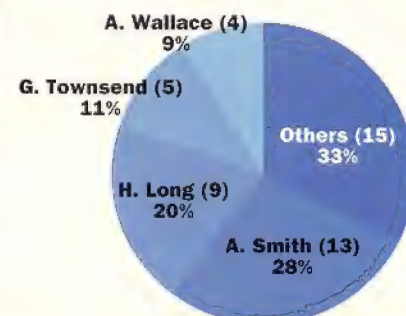
Predicted 1993 record, finish: 9-7, third.

Player on the rise: Shannon Sharpe—the younger brother of Sterling, the Packers' Pro Bowl receiver—made a name for himself last year when he led the Broncos with 53 catches. Expect more this year.

Player on the decline: Vance Johnson's reception totals plunged in the last four years from 76 to 54 to 21 to 24. Blame the fall partly on injuries, partly on a lost step.

Raiders by the Numbers

The Raiders had a formidable two-man pass rush in '92: Anthony Smith and Howie Long combined for 22 of the team's 46 sacks.



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BRUCE SCHWARTZMAN

Kennedy's a terror for Seattle's defense, but teams that can't score don't win.

Greg Townsend and Don Mosebar 32. No, George Allen isn't in charge of personnel in L.A. It only seems that way.

Players on the move: Take a deep breath: The Raiders signed Jeff Hostetler, a mobile quarterback who doesn't make a lot of mistakes—or big plays—and declined to make an offer for free-agent Jay Schroeder, an inconsistent QB who made a lot of mistakes. They lost multitalented but fading and disgruntled Marcus Allen and picked up an inconsistent, injury-prone scatback, Gaston Green. They lost Reggie McElroy after signing a better left tackle, Gerald Perry. They traded Mervyn Fernandez and replaced him with an even older wideout, James Lofton. They probably will add Rocket Ismail and drop Eric Dickerson. They drafted Patrick Bates, who might replace fiery safety Ronnie Lott in cover-

age but never intimidation or leadership. They signed Joe Kelly in their never-ending attempt to corner the market on mediocre linebackers.

The bottom line: The Raiders made a lot of moves but not a lot of progress in the offseason. It's simplistic to say a new quarterback—unless we're talking Steve Young or Dan Marino—will overcome all their problems.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

Predicted 1993 record, finish: 3-13, fifth.

Player on the rise: Chris Warren. Prior to last season everyone thought Seattle should make a big trade or draft move to get a great halfback, but coach Tom Flores thought Warren, a 1990 fourth-round choice from little Ferrum College, would

come through. And he did, running for 1,017 yards and averaging 4.6 yards per attempt despite absolutely no help from the other 10 offensive players.

Player on the decline: Rueben Mayes ran for 1,353 yards as a New Orleans rookie in 1986 but ripped up his Achilles tendon in 1989 and missed that season, played a year, then retired. He tried to come back last year, but Warren relegated him to a bit role.

Players on the move: Most of the offensive line is moving—not a bad idea considering last year's ineptitude. Andy Heck, who moved from left tackle to left guard last year, moves to right tackle this year. Bill Hitchcock moves from right tackle to right guard. Free spirit Mitch Frerotte, a Harley-driving, face-painting, touchdown-scoring Bills backup, arrives from Buffalo to back up the Seahawks at left guard. Ray Donaldson, a former Pro Bowler who could be washed up, moves from Indy to challenge center Joe Tofflemire. Miami tight end Ferrell Edmunds, who gets open but drops too many passes and misses too many blocks, and Dallas backup Kelvin Martin, a big-play return man and a pretty good wideout, will boost the receiving corps. The Seahawks made Notre Dame quarterback Rick Mirer the draft's No. 2 pick and released former first-round pick and big-time bust Kelly Stouffer.

The bottom line: The Seahawks are the only NFL team to finish in the top 10 in total defense each of the past three years, but that doesn't matter. Edmunds, Martin, and a healthy Brian Blades and John L. Williams will help, and the schedule is easy, but Mirer and Seattle aren't ready to win. ■

Seahawks by the Numbers

The Seahawks were bad on first and second down but downright lousy on third down, converting a league-low 26% of the time.

Third-down efficiency

Seahawks 1992: 26.6%

Opponents 1992: 32.6%

Seahawks 1991: 34.7%

Opponents 1991: 35.5%

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& Brett Butler - TRIPLE THREAT
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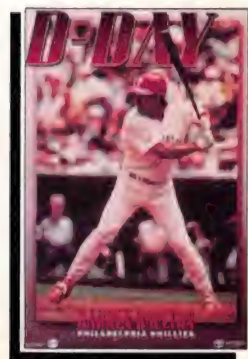
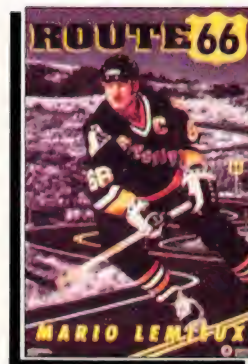
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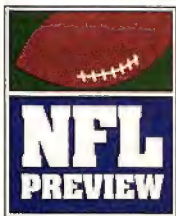
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The Black M

Even last season's devastating collapse against Buffalo is nothing compared to the hurdles of hatred Warren Moon has had to clear in his life

By BRAD BUCHHOLZ



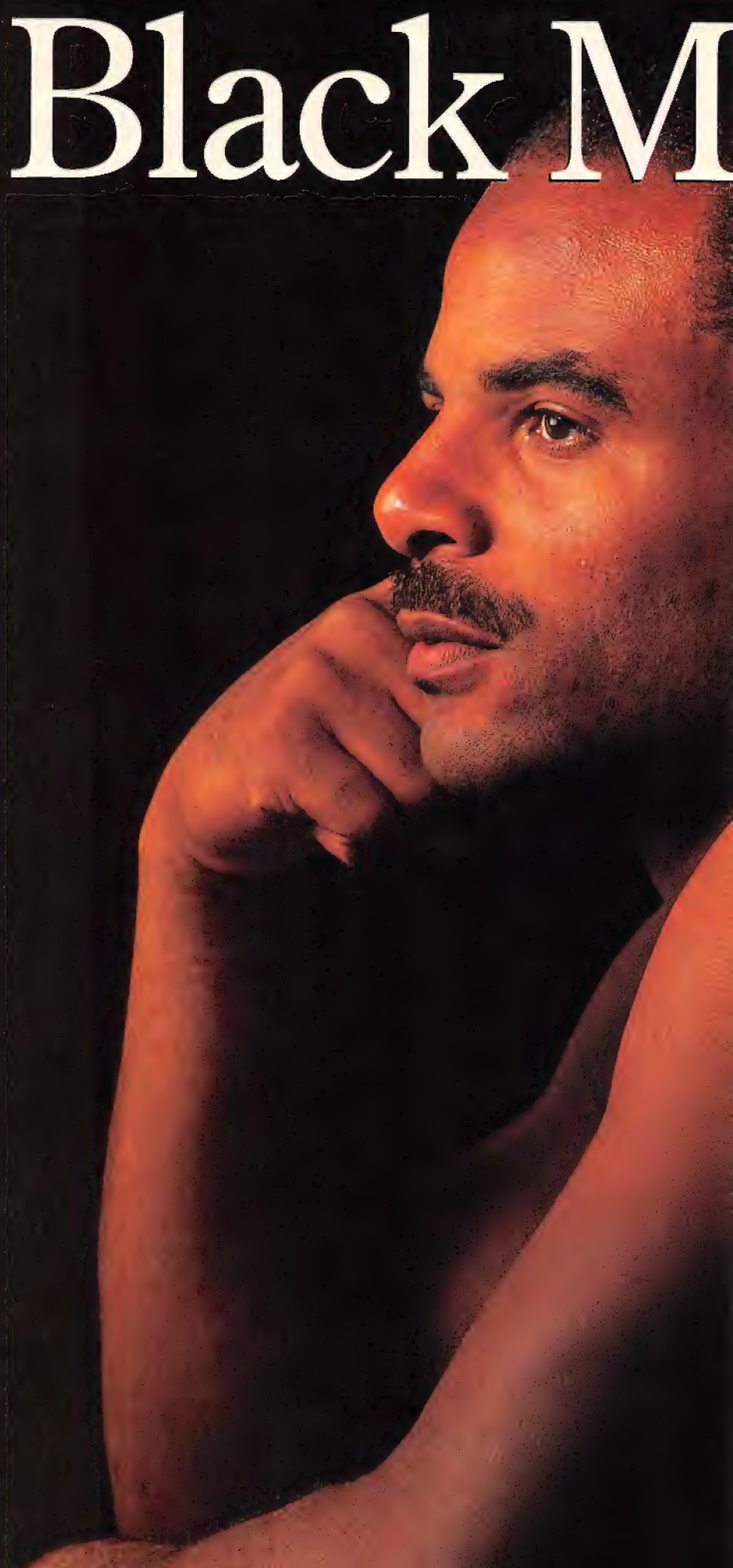
WARREN MOON grew up in the Mid-City district of Los Angeles, where the distance between opportunity and desperation is often measured by a handful of city blocks:

a right turn to the comfort of Baldwin Hills, a left turn toward poverty in the Jungle. As an eight-year-old boy, Moon caught his first glimpse of the Watts riots of 1965 while riding down to the corner service station to put air in his bicycle tires.

"Crossing Adams and Crenshaw, I remember seeing this big jeep—a National Guard jeep, with patrolmen in the back of it—with a huge machine gun on the back," recalls Moon. "And the guy was pointing the gun at every car that went by."

"It was scary. It felt like a war zone. I remember it all very vividly, and it really came back to me during the riots in L.A. I [remember] the burning, the furniture stores down the street all burnt out, the whole bit. I was right in it. This time, the riots came within five blocks of my mother's house. She was terrified, again."

Moon thinks about Los Angeles a lot, sensing the vivid connection between his birthplace and his destiny. Why were the buildings on fire? What prompts a society to train a gun upon itself? The boy on the bicycle who watched the scene with silent astonishment was still too young to understand the answers, but everything you can see today in Moon—the Houston Oilers'



an's Burden

All-Pro quarterback, the social humanitarian, the silent perfectionist, the intensely aware black man—is deeply rooted in this past.

Strikingly poised and soft-spoken, Moon possesses a strong sense of who he is: a child of urban America who was raised by a widowed mother in a household with six sisters; a symbol of black hope who has endured episodes of ignorance and racial harassment throughout his career. Booed at the University of Washington and overlooked in the NFL draft, Moon has gone on to throw for more yardage than any pro quarterback in history. At the age of 36 he remains the best player in NFL history never to have played in a championship game, an athlete defined by intense courage and exasperating disappointment.

When Moon talks, very quietly, about his aspirations, the earnestness in his voice reveals that there's a lot more going on here than just football dreams. The quarterback is not a poetic man; discipline and responsibility guide his life like iron rails. Still, even Moon had allowed himself to see the mythic possibilities of the '92 season: a native son, a black quarterback, a former Rose Bowl hero, returning home to play in a Pasadena Super Bowl game in the year of the L.A. riots, before the clock runs out on his career.

So much for poetry.

Moon was the No. 1-rated quarterback in the league, in the midst of his finest season, when he sustained a broken arm while diving for a first down in Minnesota in Week 11. He rushed his recovery and made it back for the playoffs—just in time to become an unwitting participant in the most excruciating second-half collapse in NFL history, Houston's 41-38 overtime loss to Buffalo in an AFC wild-card game.

"I'm sure that game will always be remembered," says Moon, who threw four first-half touchdown passes as the Oilers sped to a 35-3 third-quarter advantage. "You can never forget something like that. But the year before, we got beat by Denver in the final seconds after controlling the game for the first 58 minutes. That was a devastating loss, too, and people said we'd never make it back.

"Last year had all the makings of a great

story, but I guess it wasn't meant to happen. Maybe there's another ending down the road." Moon pauses. "It's never been easy. It's never happened the way it was supposed to. But I've just got to go on. I know it's going to come."

Moon's odyssey is a story of trials. The first one occurred in 1964, when his father, the family's sole provider, died of a heart attack at age 37. Moon was seven years old, the middle child and lone boy of seven children. "From the very moment my mom sat me down and told me what had happened and what would be expected of me," he says, "I felt this tremendous sense of responsibility."

To this day, Moon's siblings refer to him as "Everybody's Daddy"—because, says sister Natalie, "he's always making sure everybody's taken care of." As a child, Moon's interest in his sisters' well-being was ceaseless: "Do you have a ride home? Don't you think you should be wearing a coat? What are you doing coming home at this hour?"

Moon's inspiration is his mother, who taught him discipline and organization. After her husband's death, Pat Moon trained to become a private nurse and went to work at a convalescent home to support her family. At first the hours were terrible, 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., but she made sure the family spent evenings together before she went to work, and she returned early enough in the morning to see her children off to school. Life, like the rent, was a month-to-month proposition—but all six daughters went to college.

Natalie describes a petite, dimpled mother with a soft voice and a disciplined spirit—a woman so pretty she once worked as a model in Atlanta—but Warren's description conjures up the image of a woman of iron who refused to give in to the rising tide of gangs and drugs in L.A. "She'd tell me things like, 'You can rob a bank. You can commit murder. But I would never, never want you to use drugs.' That's how big she was against drugs and alcohol," recalls Moon, whose most painful childhood moment was when the police caught him shoplifting a headband. "So it's something I never experimented with. I've



never taken a puff of a marijuana cigarette. I've never dropped a pill. And I've had friends who overdosed on pills in the locker room in junior high school."

Moon admits he "wanted to get away from my neighborhood," and guardianship was arranged that allowed him to attend Hamilton High School in West Los Angeles. Football was the only sport he played there. After the season, he worked in a variety of small jobs—kitchen apprentice, clerical assistant—to help provide for his sisters.

Looking back, Moon marvels at his mother's ability to "spread it all around, to where everybody is happy." On the football field, the son has been praised for doing the very same thing—distributing the ball to four receivers in Houston's run-and-shoot offense. As the mother led with a soft voice and a firm manner, so does the son.

"He's so soft-spoken we call him the Johnny Mathis of football," says Oilers wide receiver Haywood Jeffires, the AFC's

Last year's playoff disaster ruined Moon's shot at a Super Bowl in the 'hood.

leading receiver the last three seasons. "He's so quiet we've had to learn to read his lips when he calls signals. It works great when he's behind the center, but when he steps back into the shotgun it can be a real problem.

"Most quarterbacks—John Elway, Dan Marino, Jim Kelly—they're really loud. If you stand on the sidelines you can hear them yelling at their players. But Warren leads in a different way. He doesn't have to yell or beat it out of you to be a leader. I tell you, man, there's something in the way he walks that lets you know."

Moon's boyhood idol was Los Angeles Rams quarterback Roman Gabriel, a silent, strong-armed leader who never played in a Super Bowl. Moon sees the ideal quarterback as "a calming influence" when everyone else on the field is too excited to stay cool. "I think of that demeanor as something like that of a father or a father figure

around the house, which is kind of what I was [at home]," he says. "You'd never look at your father as a guy who would lose it. You always see him as a guy in control."

Moon and Jeffires had some rocky years together after the Oilers selected the wide receiver in the first round of the 1987 draft. The two seemed destined to clash: Moon was the team's player representative during the '87 players strike; Jeffires crossed the picket line. Moon was the epitome of silence and discipline; Jeffires was a rookie misfit, chronically late for team meetings.

"He came up to me when I first got here and said, 'Haywood, I'm going to take control of your life before you lose your life,'" says Jeffires, smiling at the memory. "He said it so softly that it took me a second to get it. It was like, 'Hey! Are you fussin' at me?' I remember thinking, 'Why should I listen to you? I'm my own man.' But I just didn't understand. I was lazy. I thought I

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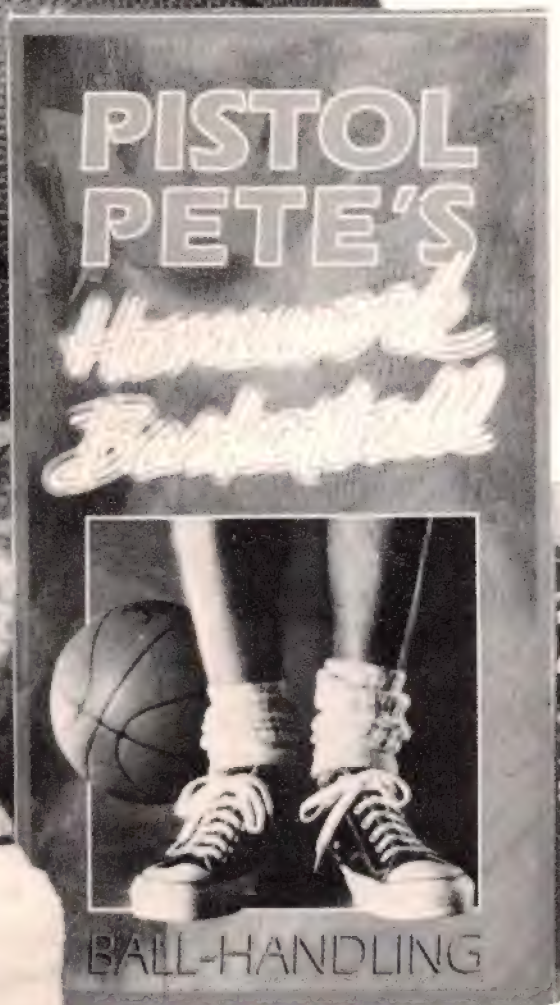
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"Warren Moon made me into a player—his kind of player. He showed me what it was to be a man. The man's an angel out of the sky, a server, a people person. Beyond that, the man has guts. And that's the word for him: *man*. He's the guy who holds us together. If Warren Moon ever went to another team and the Oilers asked me if I wanted to stay here, I would say no. That's how strongly I feel."

Moon's most treasured moment—"the most electrifying feeling I've ever had in sports"—came on New Year's Day 1978, when he started at quarterback for the Washington Huskies in the Rose Bowl. The outcome seems less important to him than "the sound of 102,000 people screaming as I walked around the field before the game. It was all I could do to get over that and play." Washington beat Michigan 27-20 that day, and Moon was named MVP in his final college game. The win marked the Huskies' first step into national prominence under a young Don James. "Warren Moon," says

the coach, "is the guy who put us over the top."

But there were other moments at Washington that Moon and his family remember, too. "When we weren't winning there, the racism was blatant," Warren's wife, Felicia, told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1984. "There would actually be letters in the paper saying that Warren was Don James' token black. Fans would call him names in the stands; they'd call him nigger. Of course, when we made the Rose Bowl, things were fine again."

The story of Moon's first two seasons at Washington has more to do with ignorance and boos than completions and attempts. Moon beat out a popular white Seattle native, fifth-year senior Chris Rowland, as the team's starting quarterback in 1975. James' decision prompted heavy scrutiny of Moon's leadership—one Seattle columnist wrote: "If Patton had had Moon's leadership, U.S. troops would have never even made Palermo"—and throwing arm (his completion rate was 39%) as the team waddled through a pair of .500 seasons.

The quarterback still cringes at the memory of throwing a pass out of bounds

to stop the clock on a key drive against Stanford, not realizing it was fourth down. Washington won the game, but the ensuing debate over Moon's intelligence and poise escalated. Showered with boos, he frequently left the field by addressing the crowd with his index finger raised high to signal No. 1. "I was just letting them know that hey, I'm still your No. 1," says Moon. "You can talk about me all you want, but I'm your guy. Take me or leave me."

Still, the racial slurs tormented him. "That situation up there really opened up my eyes to the way the country is," says Moon. "Even though I grew up in Los Angeles, I still wasn't prepared for the booing, the name-calling, the things my wife—my girlfriend at the time—had to go through in the stands. Buddies of mine even got into fights to defend my honor, just because they couldn't listen to that stuff without putting up a fight." The harassment got so bad Moon had to ask Felicia to stop wearing a jersey with his name on it at games.

Shocked by what he had to put up with, Moon considered transferring until his mother talked him out of it. That's saying a

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lot, considering how hard he fought to get into Washington in the first place. Though he was a high school All-American, Moon was not taken seriously as a prospect. Arizona State was the only major school that recruited him as a quarterback, as opposed to a defensive back, but even the

Sun Devils bailed out in the end. Moon remembers when they called him with the news that they had signed a white All-America quarterback and probably would shift Moon to defense.

Determined to prove himself as a quarterback, Moon decided to attend West Los

Angeles Junior College, where his high school coach, Jack Epstein, had signed on as offensive coordinator. After a fine freshman season, however, Moon was startled to hear the head coach "forbid" him to leave campus until he completed his two years of eligibility. "I actually had to steal film from our film library and send it off to schools on my own," says Moon.

"The key was to get the film out there, get the coaches to look at it quickly, and then get it back into the library before anyone noticed it was missing. I sent film to Washington, Cal-Berkeley, Colorado, the University of Hawaii. All the film was returned to me, by mail, to my house." Washington got the first canisters and presented the first offer.

To this day, James believes prejudice was not a factor in the way Moon was treated by Washington's fans. He suggested to Moon that the fans' behavior actually was a reflection of their feelings toward the coach. "I felt that way, too—for a while," says Moon. "All I can say is, he didn't have to sit in the stands."

Looking back, Moon sees the Washington experience as a personal crucible—a moment when he saw the worst in man and vowed never to let it shock him again. "I didn't cry," he says. "I didn't kick the

Though he was a high school star, Moon was recruited by but one Division I team.



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ground. I mean, I still reacted in a cool manner. And inside, it was tearing me apart. There are things that bother me, but I have a great way of hiding it. My mother tells me all the time I keep too much in.

"But there was a time," he adds after a pause. "We played USC when I was a senior, in a game that [helped win] the Pac-8 championship. And I ran something like 70 yards for a touchdown to break the game open. The whole crowd was chanting my name, and the scoreboard was flashing 'War-ren! War-ren!' And that was the time I wanted to go out in the middle of the field and just give them the bird. But I didn't. And I'm glad I didn't." His voice is soft, reflective. There is not a trace of arrogance. "But it was a time when I thought I could get everybody back at one time."

Marty Schottenheimer began the day with a dare. Passing Moon during pregame warmups on December 16, 1990, the Kansas City coach gave him a hearty shove in the back and silently walked on without looking back. "I was waiting for him to turn around and at least make a joke gesture or something about it—and he was serious!" Moon says. "He did it as if to say, 'This is the type of day it's going to be.' Right there, that got me so pumped up and ready to play against his football team that I did have an unconscious feeling that day, just because of the way he tried to intimidate me before the game started."

Three hours later, Moon found himself in a position to make NFL history against one of football's great secondaries, needing only 28 more yards to break Norm Van Brocklin's single-game passing record of 554 yards. Holding a 27-10 lead in the fourth quarter, Moon huddled with his teammates on the sideline in cold Arrowhead Stadium and plotted the Oilers' final possession. The receivers could barely contain their excitement.

"We're all going, 'Pass the ball! Get the record!'" recalls Jeffries, who caught nine passes for 245 yards that day. "And he says, 'No, no, guys. We're just going to put the ball down.' We couldn't believe it." Forced to choose between making a mark in history or conveying grace, Moon chose the honorable road. *Hey, my hand hurts. It's a cold day. We might have to play Kansas City again in the playoffs. Let's go home.*

When the Oilers returned home, a review of game films showed that officials incorrectly called a long pass to Jeffries incomplete early in the game. Had it been ruled a completion, Moon would have had enough yardage to break the record.

"I asked him the next week: 'Does this bother you? Does this affect you?'" says wide receiver Ernest Givins. "And he said, 'It bothers me. But if I show it to you, or show it to anybody else, I'm just like everybody else. And I don't want to be like that.' I couldn't even respond. I'm like, 'Well, OK. I'll talk to you later.'"

In the end, Schottenheimer describe

Moon's play that day as "the singularly finest performance I've ever seen by a quarterback." For some, however, it was still not enough.

"I got criticized quite a bit by my own people for it [for choosing not to break the record]. I was called a redneck, an Uncle Tom, the whole bit," says Moon, referring specifically to a column written in *The Informer*, a black weekly based in Houston. "Even Jesse Jackson came out and said how important that would have been to break that record, for black people. And I never thought about all that at the time. If I had thought all this was going to happen after the game, I would have said, 'Let's go ahead and break it.'"

"At the time, I had my reasons. But as I said to Kevin [Gilbride, the Oilers offensive coordinator], I'll get a chance to break that record again. And I think I will."

When assessing Moon's career, this pursuit of perfection—and the sting of falling just short—is every bit as important as his accomplishments. The city of Houston knows the feeling, having never won a major sports championship. A generation of black quarterbacks knows it, too.

Before signing with the Oilers in 1984, Moon telephoned Doug Williams to ask about the challenges a black quarterback would face in the NFL. Moon had spent six record-breaking years with the Edmonton Eskimos in the Canadian Football League—no one selected him in the 1978 NFL draft—and was curious about the state of the social climate.

"The one thing he told me that I really took to heart is this: We have to be better," says Moon. "We have to be better in order to maintain our jobs. If we fall down a little bit, we'll be out. They're not going to be patient."

"If we're playing well, on top, and we can help right away, then we'll be the guy. But if we're a guy that might be two or three years away and might need to be groomed, they're not going to do that. You just don't see too many young black quarterbacks who are going to be 'the quarterback of our future.'"

Obviously, Moon is very aware that as a black quarterback he's a symbol, and he embraces the perceived responsibility that comes with the image. He was close friends with Mickey Leland, the U.S. Representative from Houston who died in a plane crash in 1989 while on a famine relief mission in Ethiopia. When Moon first met the Rev. Jackson, the two men hit it off immediately; Jackson shoots a pretty fair game of basketball, and Moon knows a lit-

Perseverance and dignity: the hallmarks of Moon's record-setting career.



"It's never been easy, but maybe there's another ending down the road."

tle bit about the American social terrain. They stayed up all night exchanging ideas, and they promised to work together on voter registration drives.

In 1989 Moon founded the Crescent Moon Foundation, a non-profit humanitarian organization that reflects the quarterback's personal understanding of opportunity, education, and inner city minorities. Moon's fund-raising efforts have enabled 63 Houston students to attend college on scholarship, with 20 more expected to join this year. When Moon talks about obstacles and opportunities in urban America, one hears a little bit of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and a little bit of a kid who grew up in the middle of L.A.

"When you talk about the rioting in Los Angeles—and the anger and the hatred that came out of that—sure, the Rodney King incident had something to do with it," says Moon, who also has set up scholarship funds at Hamilton High and his L.A. junior college. "But this had been building up for years, and it's basically because people in those communities don't feel like they're a part of society. They don't see themselves going anywhere.

"If you don't feel a part of society and if you don't have any value for your own life, then what's to stop you from taking somebody else's life or destroying someone else's property? Until you create opportunities for these people to make them feel like they're a part of society, it's going to happen again."

Moon can hear the clock ticking in America's inner cities. In terms of his football career, he senses that time is precious, too. He'll turn 37 this year, yet he runs an attack that places more physical demands on its quarterback than any other offense in the NFL. He's at his peak now, but for how long? Moon's peers understand his quiet sense of urgency; when the quarterback collapsed at midfield, exhausted and frustrated, after a heartbreaking loss to Denver last year, even the Broncos players rushed to comfort him, to remind him that his time would come.

After the Buffalo loss, Moon continued to work out as if the season was still in progress, from the Pro Bowl through May. L.A. pushed him. Schottenheimer pushed him. Now he's driven by the challenge of holding the Oilers together.

"It took him a long time to get over the Buffalo game," says a friend. "He had to eat Buffalo on every talk show for two or three months. But he's played so long—I know he's put it behind him. He realizes his days

as a player are numbered. He's ready."

He lives a comfortable life in the suburbs of Houston, but Joshua Moon is just a half-hour's freeway ride away from the poverty of the inner city. He attends an integrated school and faces a world of opportunity that many of his father's boyhood friends never knew.

Yet Joshua, age 11, has twice left the Astrodome in tears during the last two seasons after hearing members of the crowd berate his father and direct racial slurs at his family. Many of the Oilers have been touched by the sight of their quarterback kneeling next to his son in the locker room, trying to explain the meaning of the words.

"It hurt Warren to hear people call him nigger; it hurt more than anything else," says Jeffries. "And I think it scared him a little that his kids heard it. What can you say? I remember him telling his son that people often say some things that they don't really mean. And at the same time, they do mean those things, in a way."

December 1991 is a month Moon will never forget. During a Monday night game in the Astrodome, his family was rocked by a barrage of racial slurs as the Oilers lost their second game in two weeks. "There's no question that his family was a target," says Judy Riley, an executive director at the Crescent Moon Foundation. "Everyone knows where Warren's wife and children sit in the stands. There was nothing accidental about it."

Riley and her staff received "200 hateful calls" during the next five days. Some callers shouted slurs and slammed down the phone; others took more time. For Moon, it was a week of hate. But he never said a word to the media—until the following Sunday, when his anguish slipped out in his comments after a victory against Pittsburgh. "I accept the boos if I'm not playing well," he said. "I just don't like the fact that my family has to sit up there and listen to it."

"It's sad to me that my son has to listen to those type of things, in this day and age, in this place, where his dad is not a bad football player and not that bad a person. But there are a lot of ignorant people out there who let that ignorance be known. That's all it is: ignorance vs. intelligence.



TOM DIPACE

And in a lot of places, ignorance has just taken over."

To this day, Riley believes the harassment was specially orchestrated by a KKK-style extremist group intent on shaking black pride. At the time, David Duke was a major figure in the daily news, and tensions between blacks and whites were running high during a mayoral campaign in Houston. But the following week, Riley estimates that she received 2,000 calls of apology—hecklers apologizing for their remarks, embarrassed whites apologizing for an entire race.

"It balanced itself out in the end and blew over," says Moon. "But it did happen, and you're always going to think about that." And so will his son—who was brought to tears again in the Oilers' home loss to Pittsburgh on opening day last season.

What drives strangers to say such things about his father? How do you explain the anger? The boy hugging his father in the locker room is still a bit too young to understand the answers to the questions, but the father knows them all too well. ■

As a veteran sports journalist in Texas, senior writer BRAD BUCHHOLZ has enjoyed a front-row seat for many of Moon's most memorable moments.

1 DAN PLESAC
Chicago Cubs

BEST: "Camden Yards. Good bathroom, great view, and good mounds. You're very far from the crowd out in left center, so there's nobody reaching down and distracting you while you're warming up."

WORST: "Detroit is by far the worst. It's down below the ground, it's dusty, and the wind swirls around. It's hot in the summer and extremely cold early and late in the year. And you don't have a great view to watch the game."

2 JEFF MONTGOMERY
Kansas City Royals

BEST: "Royals Stadium because it has a TV, telephone, microwave, and refrigerator, and the mounds are the same every day."

WORST: "Detroit. It's like a submarine—there are so many coats of paint on the wire you can't see through it. Plus it's cold there—and I give up a lot of runs."

3 NORM CHARLTON
Seattle Mariners

BEST: "San Diego. You're real close to the fans, and you can order peanuts and Cokes from the vendors working in the aisles."

A room and a view: Beck loves the Braves bullpen.

How Do They Spell Relief?

It's not D-E-T-R-O-I-T, that's for sure. When big-league relievers are asked about baseball's bullpens, nobody wants to go near Motown

The bat boy who protects the visiting bullpen is great. He looks like a little John Kruk."

WORST: "San Francisco has the worst bullpen in the National League. First of all, it's across the field, and they encase you in

a glass box. Then there's the weather. The wind comes from all directions and blows dirt in your face. It's not a pleasant experience."

4 RICK AGUILERA
Minnesota Twins

BEST: "Toronto has the best because it seats you high up and gives you a great vantage point."

WORST: "Milwaukee's bullpen is bad because the visitors' bullpen is placed behind the Brewers', and you can't see the field."

5 JOHN WETTELAND
Montreal Expos

BEST: "At Wrigley Field in Chicago the fans are so close to the bullpen they're constantly on you, but they're the wittiest fans, always coming up with one-liners. They're great. Once I turned and looked at a guy heckling me and asked him why he was doing that. The fan replied, 'We're just having fun with you. We like you, John.'"

WORST: "Jack Murphy Stadium in San Diego

bothers me the most. The bullpen is too close to the stands. I have a high leg kick, and my leg almost hits the stands."

6 ROD BECK
San Francisco Giants

BEST: "Atlanta. You're down the line, not in the dugout—pitchers like having their own place to hang out. You've got your own bench, your own bathroom, and a nice view of the field."

WORST: "Philadelphia. You can't have two pitchers throwing at the same time because the mounds are too close together, and there's no covering for the pitchers if it rains."

7 XAVIER HERNANDEZ
Houston Astros

BEST: "San Diego. You have a great view and the weather is good."

WORST: "San Francisco. It's like you're sitting in a duck blind looking through a fence and dirty Plexiglas. Also, you have fans pounding on top of the cage you're in."

8 GREGG OLSON
Baltimore Orioles

BEST: "Boston."

WORST: "Cleveland. The pitching mound and the game mound are different."

9 ROB DIBBLE
Cincinnati Reds

BEST: "Wrigley Field. The bullpen is right next to the fans, but they're always nice to you. You have a good view of the game, and I like the old-time baseball flavor."

WORST: "Dodger Stadium. It's hard to see the game, and poor lighting makes it hard to warm up. It's also the longest run to the mound."





Olson: The Tribe's pen is one more Cleveland joke.

10 MITCH WILLIAMS
Philadelphia Phillies

BEST: "Dodger Stadium. The sound effects make it sound like you're pitching more than 200 miles an hour."

WORST: "Olympic Stadium in Montreal. The mounds are so close to the playing field you can get hit by line drives."

11 STAN BELINDA
Pittsburgh Pirates

BEST: "Pittsburgh. Good seat to keep an eye on the game, and room for two pitchers to go there."

WORST: "San Francisco. We sit in a pigeon coop and walk onto the field, where we warm up in the line of play and get hit by line drives."

12 TOM HENKE
Texas Rangers

BEST: "Kansas City. It has a good view for the game, it's easy access, and you're not bothered by fans. Plus, I'm from that area—I just like it."

WORST: "Detroit, because you really can't see from where the pitchers sit. The view of the field is very poor."

13 RICH RODRIGUEZ
San Diego Padres

BEST: "Florida's. First of all, there's plenty of room and sunshine. The view is great. You're only 20 feet from the dugout. You have access to everything. And the scenery isn't bad, either."

WORST: "It's between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Neither bullpen is bad, but

they're both close to the fans, so you find out a little bit more about your family than you wanted to know. The bullpen glass in Philadelphia hasn't been wiped since Steve Carlton was there."

14 DEREK LILLQUIST
Cleveland Indians

BEST: "Ours. Just because it's home."

WORST: "It's got to be Detroit. It's tough looking through a chain-link fence with 20 coats of paint on it. Also, it's tough for us short guys to see over that concrete wall."

15 MIKE HENNEMAN
Detroit Tigers

BEST: "Oakland's is one of the best. It's in the open air, you're in the game, and there's some room."

WORST: "The bullpens I don't like are too far removed from the game, like the one in Toronto, or a little too cramped, like ours in Detroit."

16 STEVE FARR
New York Yankees

BEST: "I like the warm-up mound in Kansas City."

WORST: "Detroit."

17 JEFF RUSSELL
Boston Red Sox

BEST:

1. Toronto. "Nice view; most polite crowd."
2. Oakland. "Good view, nice mound."
3. Kansas City. "Good acoustics."
4. Chicago (Comiskey Park). "Good acoustics, but tough to see."

WORST:

1. Detroit. "Uncomfortable; no view."
2. Texas. "Uncomfortable."
3. Baltimore and Milwaukee. "Need binoculars!"

18 DON PALL
Chicago White Sox

BEST: "The best bullpen? Baltimore. You can see the whole field from there, it's comfortable, the sights and surroundings are nice, and the mounds are good to throw from."

WORST: "I've never liked the bullpen at Anaheim Stadium in California. For one, there's such a narrow opening in the outfield fence that we can't see 80% of the field. Also, the mounds are made of a hard clay, and our spikes stick in it. It's not good, natural dirt. We also throw from a dark tunnel, which is totally different than being on the field."

19 JOE GRAHE
California Angels

BEST: "Kansas City."

WORST: "Boston."

20 DOUG HENRY
Milwaukee Brewers

BEST: "It's a tie between the Metrodome in Minnesota and Camden Yards in Baltimore. At Minnesota you're not bothered by fans, and you have easy access to the dugout. The bullpen is neat at Baltimore—it goes with the whole stadium. The mounds are nice, and the atmosphere is great."

WORST: "Detroit. The bullpen is like sitting in a hole—you can't see the game. Plus, you bother the fans because you're in their way. They're looking at your waist." ■

Hernandez: One of many who stick it to the Stick.



The Heisman? Ha!

Thanks to voters in thrall to meaningless stats, college football's highest honor is a joke

By ALLEN BARRA

THE HEISMAN TROPHY, awarded annually to what the New York Downtown Athletic Club likes to call "the outstanding college football player in the United States," is widely regarded as the most prestigious award in American sports. It probably is, but it's also one of the most meaningless.

At best, many of the more than 1,300 writers who vote for the Heisman see the leading candidates a couple of times a year on television but miss deserving players who never make it to national TV. Some don't see any of the candidates; the list of eligible voters is so out of date ballots are still mailed to sportswriters who have been dead for years. And what does "outstanding" mean, anyway? The most valuable? The best at a particular position? Or the best pro prospect?

Every year the confused sports fan is bombarded with reams of statistics generated by university public relations departments frantic to create a consensus for their candidate before the football season even begins. Newspapers and magazines dutifully reprint the statistics as if they actually mean something: that this strong-armed Heisman Trophy candidate "passed for 3,000 yards and 72 touchdowns in his last four games," never hinting that it might have been better for his team if he had thrown about 600 fewer passes and handed the ball off to a running back now and then; that some other ball-toting young stud "just passed 24 immortals on the all-time list with his spectacular 400-yard performance" against a 1-6 team from West Tennessee Tech.

What do these statistics mean? If a bas-



ketball player hits 72 foul shots in a row, it tells us something about his shooting ability. If a shortstop accumulates a certain number of total chances, we have an objective yardstick with which to measure his performance against a left fielder or a third baseman. But how does one measure the value or effectiveness of an offensive guard or an outside linebacker? What does it really mean that a lineman had "a team-record 72 tackles"? Or the ever-popular "51.5 tack-



How could the season Torretta [left] put up in '92 possibly be considered better than Ward's?

les"? Does half a tackle mean you share the tackle with a teammate, or that you took an opponent's arm or leg off?

For that matter, how does one measure the effectiveness of a running back in relation to anything? In 1983 Nebraska's Mike Rozier averaged nearly eight yards every time he carried the ball, while Navy's Napoleon McCallum—a Heisman Trophy candidate's name if ever there was one—averaged about five. Does this mean that Rozier was one-third better as a runner than McCallum, or just that Nebraska's offensive line was one-third bigger than



Navy's? And how many times did Woody Hayes leave Archie Griffin in a game against a beaten and helpless opponent so that the two-time Heisman winner could extend his string of 100-plus yard games and thus, in the words of the *Village Voice*'s Sebastian Dangerfield, "win the damn thing twice when he didn't deserve to win it once."

Considering the number of players who theoretically are eligible for the award and the arbitrary nature of the selection process, it's amazing that there aren't more genuine controversies over the Heisman. We know of only four in our lifetime, and in every instance a good case could be made that, given the haziness of the criteria, the voters still made the right choice.

One of the most famous Heisman controversies was the selection of Paul Hornung in 1956 over such contenders as Tennessee's Johnny Majors, Syracuse's Jim Brown, and Oklahoma's Tommy McDonald. Hornung's victory was considered a spectacular public relations coup for Notre Dame publicity man Charlie Callahan: The Irish had won only two games, and no Heisman winner before (or since) had played on a losing team. Notre Dame haters still point to Hornung's Heisman as a victory for hype, pointing out that he was a flop as an NFL quarterback.

That's true, but it also overlooks a great deal. Hornung played in an era of limited substitution, when multiskilled players were valuable. Playing on a couple of truly awful Irish teams, Hornung was a good passer, a terrific runner, a superb blocker

and receiver when needed, a great kicker whose specialty was the now-forgotten dropkick (he's the last man to kick one in the NFL), and a hell of a good tackler. It's easy to score cheap points against Hornung by comparing his '56 passing and running stats to winners of recent years, but if you want to go by the classic definition of the football hero exemplified by the old song "Mr. Touchdown"—namely, "he can run, and kick, and throw"—a good case could be made that Hornung was one of the few Heisman winners who could have made a good candidate under any criteria in any era.

More grumbles were heard in 1964, when Notre Dame's John Huarte beat out the football writers' consensus choice, Alabama's Joe Namath. Southern voters saw the balloting as more Notre Dame



favoritism by the "Yankee establishment," and Namath's subsequent pro success and Huarte's lack of same after both were drafted by the Jets in 1965 seemed to

bear that out. But Huarte was an outstanding college quarterback, at least in 1964. He came within a single quarter in the last game of the season, against Southern Cal, of leading Notre Dame to a national title that, ironically, went to Alabama when the Crimson Tide slipped into first place after the Trojans nipped the Irish 20-17. (By the way, in one of the great oddities in the history of Heisman voting, Namath, who had led his team to a national title and subsequently was drafted No. 1 by both the AFL and NFL, did not finish in the top 10 of the '64 Heisman voting.)

Perhaps the silliest controversy in Heisman history—to that time—arose in 1971, when some Eastern sportswriters who probably saw four or five non-Ivy League games all year thought Cornell's Ed Marinaro deserved the award over Auburn's Pat Sullivan. Quite a few players probably deserved the award as much as Sullivan that year—Alabama's Johnny Musso, Oklahoma's Greg Pruitt, and Nebraska's Johnny Rodgers (who won it the following year), to name only a few

players on offense—but Marinaro wasn't one of them. Not that Marinaro wasn't in their league, but it was ridiculous for sportswriters to contend that running against Princeton, Yale, and Brown was the same as playing LSU, Georgia, and Alabama. Marinaro went on to a pretty good pro career while Sullivan was never more than a backup, but that doesn't alter the fact that the Heisman is awarded for accomplishment in college.

But for sheer silliness, the 1985 controversy exceeded anything in Heisman voting history. The victim was Auburn's great running back, Bo Jackson, who won the Heisman, but not without taint.

That year, perhaps soured by a rash of college recruiting and gambling scandals, the Heisman voters and a sizable number of the nation's sportswriters were seized by a virulent outbreak of self-righteousness. Suddenly, writers who went through an entire season with scarcely a mention of college football were composing editorials about how unfair the Heisman voting was because linemen and defensive players and players from small schools never win—all of which was perfectly true and had been equally true the previous year, when the Eastern media's darling, Doug Flutie, won.

But with Jackson the objections went beyond the general. The *New York Daily News* questioned Jackson's "gut-check factor"; *USA Today* questioned his ability to put out in "big" games (big games meaning, apparently, the ones Auburn lost); Mike Lupica, who probably never saw Jackson play in college, wrote that "Jackson isn't the best running back in the country" and that he "takes himself out of games when the wind blows real hard."

ABC helped legitimize the anti-Jackson sentiment with a phone survey at a time when Bo was considered a shoo-in. There was no way Jackson's case wouldn't be damaged by such a popularity poll: Iowa's Chuck Long and Michigan State's Lorenzo White, the nation's rushing leader, played in the Big Ten, whose followers outnumber those of the Southeastern Conference by at least four to one. ABC's Beano Cook, hinting that Brigham Young's Robbie Bosco was a worthier candidate than Jackson, wrote that Bosco "played in the wrong time zone." Apparently Utah's

time zone somehow was less favorable than the one played in by the seven West Coast players who have won in the last 25 years.

Why all the fuss over someone who was so obviously the outstanding player at one of the most important positions in the game? It started with a *Birmingham (Ala.) Post-Herald* sportswriter named Paul Feinbaum, who waged a season-long war against Jackson.

In remarks that were widely quoted, Feinbaum wrote that "Bo has been spoiled by the publicity, and he really hasn't learned to handle himself in public. If his maturity had approached his talent, most of this could have been avoided." That Jackson's character—or at least Feinbaum's ability to interpret Jackson's character—didn't interfere with Jackson's ability to juke linebackers wasn't considered. Within a short time, anti-Bo stories were a boom industry.

One highly publicized rap against Jackson was that he took himself out of two key games in order to "save" himself and run up big stats the following week, but let's take a look at that charge. In a nationally televised game against SEC rival Tennessee, Jackson twisted his knee and chose to sit out the second half, and in the October 7, 1985, issue of *Sports Illustrated*, Rick Reilly wrote that Jackson was held to "only" 80 yards on 17 carries. However, Tennessee didn't "hold" Jackson at all: 80 yards in 17 carries is an excellent performance, and an entire game at that rate—34 carries for 160 yards—certainly wouldn't have hurt Jackson's rep. (Since Tennessee led 24-0 at the half and went on to win by three touchdowns, it's obvious that Auburn's problems were as much defensive as offensive.)

Later in the season a bigger flap ensued when Jackson came out of a game with Florida with a deep thigh bruise, an injury that sent some sportswriters into paroxysms of laughter—more support for Namath's point that he "never saw a football writer who had to stand up to a blitz." However, Jackson did try to play in the second half; his 16 carries in less than a half against Florida were almost as many as Lorenzo White had all day in his worst performance, against Michigan; and far from running up his stats against East Carolina the following week, Jackson was able to carry only 14 times. In fact, still hurting the following week, he had only 19 carries against Georgia.

And so, perhaps the greatest running back in college football history ended up winning the Heisman by one of the smallest margins ever. Today, does Rick Reilly

Georgia peach: Zeier's the top Dawg this year.



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want to be reminded that he wrote in *Sports Illustrated*, "Don't even compare Bo to Herschel Walker"? (In a way, he had a point: Walker averaged 5.2 yards a carry for his

college career, while Bo, playing in the same conference, averaged 6.6. Maybe they *shouldn't* be compared.) Does any voter who passed up Jackson for Long want to be reminded of it?

There must have been something in the air in the last half of the '80s, because two years later another great player started the season a Heisman front-runner and nearly lost out because of a barrage of late-season bad publicity. Notre Dame's Tim Brown was a great kick returner, an outstanding wide receiver, a fine ball carrier, even a deadly down-field blocker. In 1987 he caught 39 passes for an amazing 22 yards-per-catch average and single-handedly destroyed teams with his punt returning. Yet a late-season rush of anti-Brown publicity almost cost him the Heisman, the reason being that—guess what?—he played for Notre Dame. This fact was somehow thought to prejudice voters in his favor, though in fact he was really Notre Dame's first serious candidate since Joe Theismann 17 years earlier. What voters should have been concentrating on was how Brown was able to compile such amazing numbers virtually unaided: Not even trivia buffs remember who the Notre Dame passers were in 1987.

Since then, the Heisman voting has pret-

ty much spun out of control. It's become so much a matter of statistics—never mind the relevance of the stats, or who they were compiled against—that you wonder why anyone bothers to vote at all. How about the first passer to crack 4,000 yards wins? Here's brief review of the last five years:

In 1988 the Heisman went to Barry Sanders. Now, no one's going to argue that Sanders wasn't a great runner, but in his senior year Oklahoma State didn't face a single first-rate opponent; even Oklahoma and Nebraska didn't field their usual powerhouse squads that year. Two of the Cowboys' opponents, Kansas and Kansas State (against whom Sanders gained a combined total of nearly 600 yards) were so bad that they managed one victory each other. Sanders was left in games long after opponents were beaten just to pile up meaningless stats and impress Heisman voters, and it worked. But Oklahoma State would have had the same record in 1988 if Sanders had left each game at halftime.

Far more deserving than Sanders were UCLA's Troy Aikman and USC's Rodney Peete, who led their teams to great seasons against much better opposition. For that matter, Miami's Steve Walsh, one of the great overlooked college passers of the decade, faced a schedule tougher than any Heisman candidate and averaged an impressive eight yards per pass doing it. If Walsh had been able to convert a two-point try against Notre Dame, he would have had a national championship ring to show for the season.

In 1989 ESPN's Lee Corso said: "If a Martian came down to Earth and was asked to pick the best college football player in America, what would he do? He'd look at the statistics, and the statistics show that Andre Ware is the best college football player in the nation." Somewhere in outer space, two Martians on Earth Patrol must have looked at each other and said, "What a dum-dum." Ware's rep as a passer in 1989 was based on his performance in four games against UNLV, Temple, SMU, and TCU, who had a combined record of 12-41. Against those four teams he threw 197 passes for 1,797 yards—a terrific 9.1-yard average—with 26 touch-

1993 Heisman Hopefuls

Choosing "the outstanding college football player in America" was difficult enough when you had dozens of seniors and juniors to consider. Now, with many of the best players leaving college before their eligibility is up, it's like trying to pick future MVPs in baseball from among a crop of rookies. Still, a few players stand out as Heisman candidates as we approach the 1993 season. In no particular order, they are:

CHARLIE WARD, QB, senior, Florida State

If he stays healthy, there's almost no doubt Ward will get the Heisman. He's really not a pro-style passer, but why should that be an issue? He passed for 2,647 yards last year and ran for 504 more, accounting for 28 touchdowns by air or ground, and got better as the season went on. Ward probably will have to beat both Miami and Notre Dame to win the trophy, but he'll get the chance in front of a national audience. He's clearly the front-runner.

DAVID PALMER, WR, junior, Alabama

Perhaps the most talented football player in the nation: a dazzling receiver, electrifying kick and punt returner, and solid ball carrier who even can fill in effectively at quarterback. Palmer seems to have gotten past the off-the-field problems that plagued him for the first half of the 1992 season; the only question is whether coach Gene Stallings will design an offense that will let him get his sticky hands on the ball at least 10 to 12 times per game. Palmer already has the best nickname—"the Pocket Rocket"—of any Heisman candidate.

ERIC ZEIER, QB, junior, Georgia

He was everyone's All-SEC quarterback last year, despite the Bulldogs' focus on Garrison Hearst, and the running back's defection to the pros could be a blessing, forcing Georgia to open up an offense that bogged down a lot even when Hearst shifted into gear 30 times a game. Zeier may miss wideout Andre Hastings, but the Bulldogs should find adequate replacements, and tight end Shannon Mitchell is a potential All-American.

MARSHALL FAULK, RB, junior, San Diego State

If Faulk stays healthy he has to be ranked with Ward as one of the top two

The Aztecs feature Faulk, and he walks the walk.



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- ☐ 7447 Dominique Wilkins
- ☐ 7456 Spud Webb
- ☐ 7475 Doc Rivers
- ☐ 7477 Kelly Tripucka

- ☐ 7478 Rex Chapman
- ☐ 7488 J.R. Reid
- ☐ 7472 John Stockton
- ☐ 7469 Karl Malone
- ☐ 7449 Danny Ainge
- ☐ 7403 Patrick Ewing
- ☐ 7479 Mark Jackson
- ☐ 7474 Byron Scott
- ☐ 7443 Magic Johnson
- ☐ 7446 James Worthy
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downs and just two interceptions. Against the only three good teams he faced—Arizona State, Texas A&M, and Arkansas, a combined 27-7-1—he was a bit unlucky,

throwing 167 passes for 1,102 yards (a mediocre 6.6 average) with just six TDs and seven interceptions.

Far worthier that year was Notre Dame's Tony Rice, who against seven opponents with a collective record of 56-11-2 ran for 648 yards and passed for 649 more while leading his team to an 11-1 regular-season record. For that matter, so was Colorado's Darien Hagan, whose team was unbeaten against a schedule that included five good teams, largely because Hagan ran and passed for more than 2,000 yards. But Rice and Hagan weren't classic dropback passers, and in the Heisman race only pro prospects need apply. And voters also used Florida's NCAA probation as an excuse to overlook running back Emmitt Smith, who averaged nearly a yard and a half more per carry than everyone's favorite running back that year, Anthony Thompson.

In 1990 Ty Detmer essentially put away the award in the first game of the season with a brilliant performance in Brigham Young's win over Miami. It was Detmer's only victory against a first-rate team—in

If Graves does anything at all, you'll hear about it—believe us.



fact, it's the only victory against a first-rate team BYU ever has had—and by the time the Cougars closed their season by losing a bowl game for their fourth consecutive loss, everyone wanted to take the Heisman away. What voters should have been asking themselves all along was how much credibility all those gaudy passing stats could have when they were compiled against UTEP, Washington State, San Diego State, Colorado State, Air Force, New Mexico, Utah, Utah State, and Hawaii?

That '90 season will be remembered as the year voters turned down Raghib Ismail because he didn't get the ball in his hands very often. That's true, he didn't—but when he did he made hash of the case for Detmer. And two other quarterbacks, Florida's Shane Matthews and Virginia's Shawn Moore, put up higher-quality numbers than Detmer (though not in such great quantity; they didn't pad their totals against bad teams) and against much tougher schedules.

In 1991 Desmond Howard of Michigan nailed down the award long before he struck his famous pose after scoring against Ohio State. But that's what Howard's Heisman season was: a pose. He caught 61 passes for 19 touchdowns, which sounds great until you realize he averaged less than 16 yards per catch—much lower than either Brown in '87 or Ismail in '91—and got 37 catches and 10 TDs against bad or mediocre teams: Boston College, Michigan State, Minnesota, Purdue, and Northwestern. Against Notre Dame, Florida State, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio State, he averaged an unspectacular 13.7 yards per catch. A large chunk of those numbers simply seem padded; against Indiana, for example, he had five receptions for just 32 yards, and two of those short gains went for touchdowns in situations where Michigan just as easily could have run the ball in. Howard's 21.9-yard kickoff return average was solid but unspectacular, and his reputation as a great punt returner was due largely to the 93-yarder against Ohio State (the return he followed with "the pose"), which had no effect on a game the Wolverines would have won easily in any event.

On the other hand, there's no question that Florida's Matthews was the real deal. Against the nation's toughest schedule, including seven teams whose combined won-lost records were an incredible 58-12-1, Matthews passed for 1,968 yards with 20 touchdowns against 12 interceptions. Against those seven teams—including 10-0 Alabama, 10-1 Florida State, and 9-1 Tennessee—Matthews had an 8.8 yards-per-pass average, higher than that of any

other leading passer against their entire schedule. No passer in modern college history performed better against such stiff competition than Matthews in 1991.

In 1992 everyone agreed that there was no first-rate candidate around. So they gave the Heisman to Miami's Gino Torretta because he was the quarterback on the team that finished the season ranked No. 1. Yes, it's a pretty dumb argument: Clearly Miami finished the regular season 11-0 only because of a defense that allowed just 127 points. In the four games the Hurricanes played against good teams, they put up just 60 points on offense.

What, really, was Torretta's contribution to Miami's national championship bid? Well, against Iowa, TCU, Virginia Tech, and Temple, four teams that finished a combined 10-33-2, he passed for 1,253 yards for a 9.1 average, with 10 touchdowns against just two interceptions. Very impressive—but is there anyone who doubts that the Hurricanes would have won all those games if Torretta had thrown just one TD pass against each?

However, against Arizona, Florida State, Penn State, and Syracuse, Torretta's yards-per-pass average dropped dramatically, to 7.0, and he had just three touchdown passes against five interceptions. To anyone who really studied Torretta's performances over good teams, his Sugar Bowl humiliation against Alabama should not have come as a shock. What's particularly silly about Torretta's getting the Heisman is that he wouldn't even have been in contention if Florida State had made its last-minute field goal attempt and beaten Miami. (What will Torretta's "Heisman Moment" tape show? FSU's kicker missing a field goal?)

So who should have gotten the 1992 Heisman? In a season when the consensus was that no offensive player was entirely deserving—true, perhaps, though FSU's Charlie Ward had better credentials than Torretta—it might have been a nice idea to pick a defensive player. Or how about *two* defensive players? Did any two players have as much an impact on the 1992 season as Alabama's John Copeland and Eric Curry? They were the best players on the nation's No. 1 team; they stuffed every runner; they stuffed every passer; they stuffed the Heisman Trophy winner. Torretta should give the trophy to Copeland and Curry. They earned it.

By the way, the '93 Sugar Bowl was a convincing argument for putting off the Heisman vote until after the bowl games. Not including them in the consideration of the Heisman candidates is like choosing baseball's MVP with 10 games to go during the season. ■

Heisman Hopefuls, continued

candidates. The Aztecs defense looks weak this year, which could help his chances: It simply will give the offense an excuse to keep feeding the ball to Faulk, regardless of the score. Not that San Diego State really needs an excuse—at times last year the Aztecs seemed more intent on piling up yards for Faulk than on winning games. Actually, Faulk has an advantage over Ward: Because he's a running back, his team can lose four or five games and he won't be blamed, whereas Ward loses a lot of votes if the Seminoles go 10-1.

MARVIN GRAVES, QB, senior, Syracuse

A Second Team All-American last year, Graves probably is a better player than former Orangemen quarterback Don McPherson, who nearly snuck in ahead of Brown in 1987, and as good as Gino Torretta last year. He needs a better touchdown-to-interception ratio than his 14-to-12 mark of last year, but he has an outstanding career yards-per-pass average of 8.9. And he won't be hurt by the number of Syracuse grads doing broadcasting today—think Graves won't get Bob Costas' support?

TYRONE WHEATLEY, RB, junior, Michigan

You can't kick off a Heisman campaign more effectively than by gaining 235 yards in the Rose Bowl—and Wheatley did it on just 15 carries. He's clearly an outstanding talent, and an outstanding performance at home against Notre Dame early in the season could make him the front-runner. The Wolverines' apparent strength could be a drawback, though; it'll be tough to justify leaving him in in the fourth quarter when Michigan is ahead 42-3.

TRENT DILFER, QB, junior, Fresno State

A second Heisman candidate who plays for an FSU? The 6'5" Dilfer is more of a classic dropback passer who threw for 2,836 yards last year with a healthy 8.5 average and 21 touchdowns. The Fresno State schedule isn't demanding—Baylor and San Diego State look to be the toughest teams on it—which might hurt his media attention but could help him pile up big numbers. And if Faulk is the leading candidate when the Bulldogs meet the Aztecs on November 20, Dilfer could steal Faulk's thunder—and his votes. ■

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The University of Houston is known for its high-powered aerial attack, but the Cougars are outdone by conference rival Southern Methodist on this list of college football teams that gained the highest percentage of their yards through the air last season. While that chart is dominated by the Southwest Conference and the Big Eight, which claimed the top four spots, Air Force, ironically, heads the comparable list for predominance on the ground.

GROUNDHOGS vs. HIGH FLYERS

School (Yards passing/total yards)

SMU (2,893/3,555)

Houston (4,478/5,714)

Missouri (3,223/4,234)

Colorado (3,271/4,409)

Florida (3,440/4,679)

Minimum 2,800 yards passing.

School (Yards rushing/total yards)

Air Force (2,665/3,412)

Army (2,934/3,781)

Nebraska (3,610/4,820)

Hawaii (3,519/4,835)

Clemson (2,828/4,054)

Minimum 2,500 yards rushing.

81.4%

78.4%

76.1%

74.2%

73.5%

78.1%

77.6%

74.9%

72.8%

69.8%

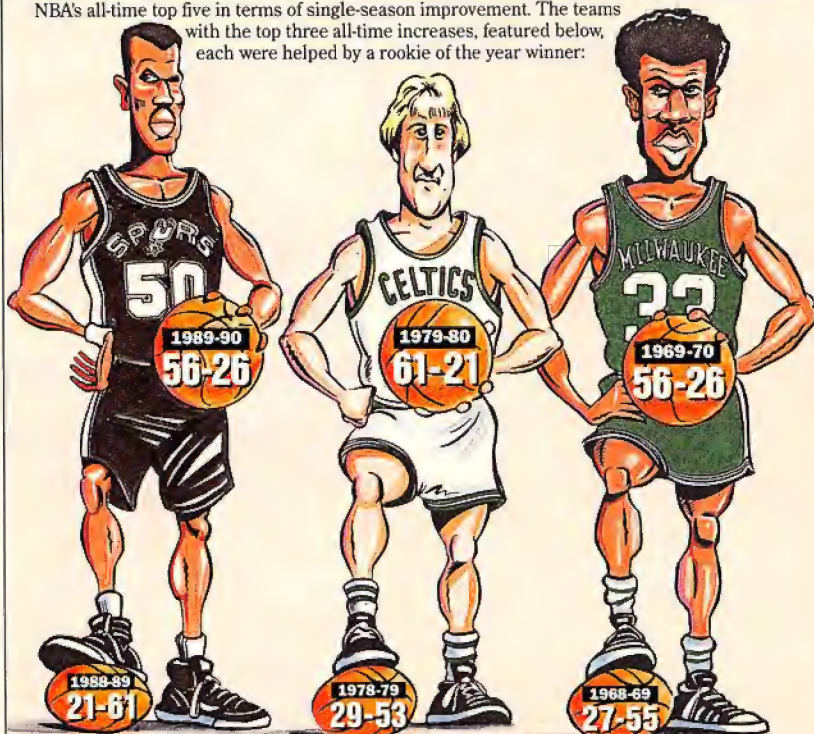
THE BIRDS ARE PREY

Sack totals alone don't necessarily show which teams do the best job of protecting their QBs, because some teams pass more often. Sack percentage (pass attempts plus sacks allowed), listed below for each NFL team in 1992, is a more accurate indicator. The Eagles' '92 sack percentage was the worst since '86, when Philly's line posted a dismal 16.8%.

Team	Sacks Allowed	Pass Plays	Sack Pct.
Saints.....	15	441	3.4%
Cowboys.....	23	514	4.5%
Redskins.....	23	508	4.5%
Dolphins.....	28	591	4.7%
Rams.....	26	521	5.0%
Oilers.....	32	605	5.3%
Bills.....	29	538	5.4%
Chargers.....	33	529	6.2%
49ers.....	32	512	6.3%
Cardinals.....	36	553	6.5%
Falcons.....	40	588	6.8%
Jets.....	39	534	7.3%
Colts.....	44	590	7.5%
Packers.....	43	570	7.5%
Browns.....	34	432	7.9%
NFL Average.....	41	520	7.9%
Vikings.....	40	498	8.0%
Buccaneers.....	45	556	8.1%
Steelers.....	40	471	8.5%
Bears.....	45	524	8.6%
Raiders.....	48	519	9.2%
Bengals.....	45	480	9.4%
Giants.....	45	478	9.4%
Broncos.....	52	525	9.9%
Chiefs.....	48	461	10.4%
Seahawks.....	67	543	12.3%
Lions.....	59	465	12.7%
Patriots.....	65	509	12.8%
Eagles.....	64	493	13.0%

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Rookies Shaquille O'Neal (+.244) and Alonzo Mourning (+.159) both helped improve their team's winning percentages dramatically last season, but neither player's team ranked in the NBA's all-time top five in terms of single-season improvement. The teams with the top three all-time increases, featured below, each were helped by a rookie of the year winner:



David Robinson: .427 rise

Larry Bird: .390 rise

Lew Alcindor: .354 rise

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THE GOOD DOCTOR

Has anybody ever had a better rotation than the Atlanta Braves?

S.C., CARY, ILL.

Maybe Warren Beatty.

Reggie White, "the Minister of Defense," consulted the heavens before making his decision, then finally settled on the Green Bay Packers. Did the Rev. Reggie make a good choice?

M.B., TOWANDA, PA.

Green Bay doesn't need a minister. Green Bay needs a miracle.

At Boston Bruins hockey games, what sort of overhead camera do the TV networks use when Neely has the puck?

D.S., GROSSE POINTE, MICH.

The Cam Cam.

Juli Inkster, the pro golfer, is doing TV commercials for a diarrhea product. Is that the best she could do?

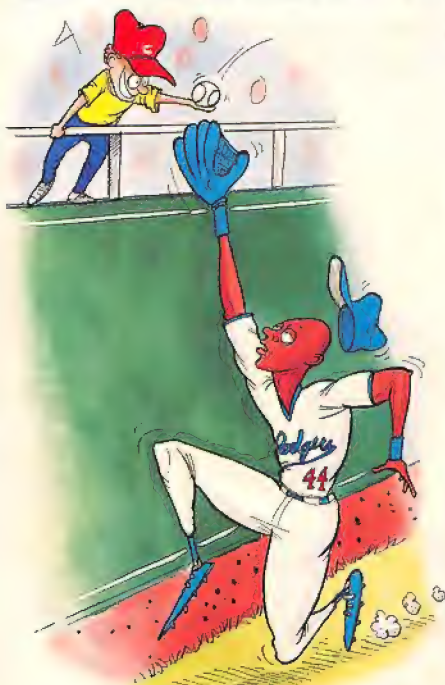
L.B., BAYBERRY, N.Y.

Poor Juli. The advertising people who hired her said only that the commercial had to do with one of "golf's greatest hazards."

Darryl Strawberry got all upset over some Dodger Stadium fan who "took away" a home run ball that Darryl was trying to catch. Why all the fuss?

M.P., UPLAND, CALIF.

It just took everybody by surprise. It was



Hey, who knew Straw would get to it?

the first good catch anyone had seen at Dodger Stadium in years.

Once and for all: Why did Chris Webber of Michigan call for that timeout?

J.N., ROCKY HILL, CONN.

Because that damned Dick Vitale was at courtside screaming: "Need a T.O., baby! Need a T.O.!"

Hockey games often have two national anthems. I hear the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim will have three.

R.N., BAY MINETTE, ALA.

Every game will begin with the audience singing three songs. First, "O Canada." Then, "The Star-Spangled Banner." And then: "M-I-G..." ("Gee, what a stupid name!") "H-TY..." ("Why? Because of that stupid movie!") "D-U-C-K-S!"

Is it true that in retribution, some Native American tribes have given their own special names to the Washington Redskins?

K.C., BATTLE MOUNTAIN, NEV.

True. Mark Rypien is now known as Stands in Pocket. Art Monk is now Stays in Bounds. Jim Lachey has become Blocks With Arms. And owner Jack Kent Cooke received his own special nickname, Insults Indians With Slur.

How much did Nolan Ryan's most recent physical ailments worry the Texas Rangers?

K.K., LONGVIEW, TEXAS

Not much. They have MediCare.

To be inducted into the LPGA Hall of Fame, a golfer must win 30 tournaments and two majors. Tell me, how would a non-golfer go about getting inducted into the LPGA Hall of Fame?

P.B., BRADLEY BEACH, N.J.

You have to prove that you've actually watched 30 LPGA tournaments.

Former NFL coaches Gene Stallings, Bill Walsh, and John Robinson all have gone back into college football. Any similar moves ahead?

G.S., SAN MANUEL, ARIZ.

Plenty. Jerry Glanville is the obvious first choice to take over for Lou Holtz at Notre Dame. John Madden is considering offers from both Harvard and Yale and may commute between the two by bus. And Bill Parcells will tire so quickly of the New England Patriots that he'll grab any avail-



And they called the Fab Five trash-talkers.

able job in America, for minimum wage—it doesn't even have to be coaching, as long as they throw in free room and board.

Who do you think will give Toni Kukoc of the Chicago Bulls the hardest time next season?

H.G., AMERICUS, GA.

The other Chicago Bulls.

Sportswriter Susan Fornoff revealed in her book that she dated Oakland baseball players while covering the team. What did this give her in your book?

K.H., HUDSON, FLA.

As for effort.

Nike shelled out an incredible sum of money to lure Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski away from Adidas. Do you think the sports apparel company will get its money's worth?

S.M., OAK GROVE, ORE.

Absolutely. I've already heard young kids in malls asking shoe clerks to sell them a pair of the new Air Krzyz...uh, Air Kyzwek...uh, like, you know, Air That Guy From Duke.

The University of Nevada-Las Vegas supposedly is on the NCAA's hit list again over an illegal offer to a recruit. What did the Vegas booster offer?

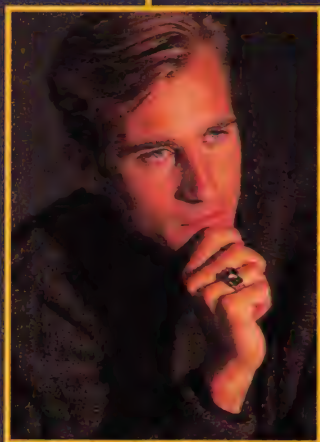
W.H., SOMERSWORTH, N.H.

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THE FAN

By JOE MANTEGNA

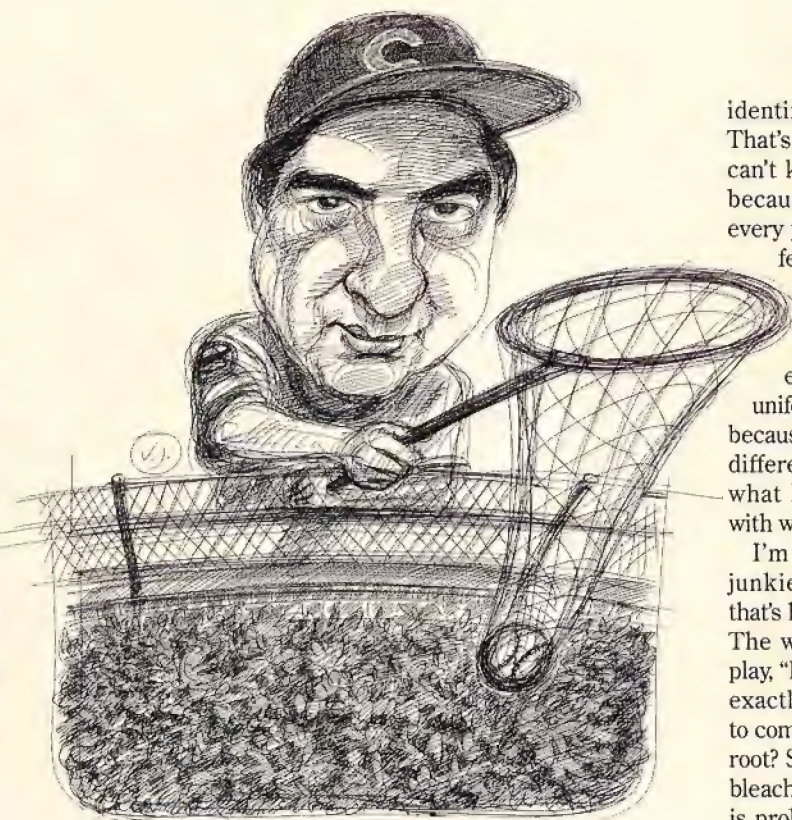
The Play's the Thing, You Know?

AS A KID, I JUST ADMIRER what a good ballplayer Ernie Banks was. I thought his whole optimism for the game was amusing—you know, his saying, "Let's play two." As I got older, though, I started to like him for reasons that went beyond his skills as a baseball player and connected more with his demeanor as a human being. I don't think Banks ever got kicked out of a ball game, and in the scheme of things with today's ballplayers, that in itself is unbelievable—I mean, even *Michael Jordan* has been kicked out of a basketball game.

One time—it must have been in the mid-'60s—Banks was playing in San Francisco against the Giants and had two homers in the game, and one of the pitchers knocked him down. The next time up the pitcher nailed him again, and Banks missed a few games. About a week later it was the same two guys facing each other. Banks was having another good game, and I remember this time the guy, like, brushed him back, you know? And Banks, he just kind of turned and gave this guy a look out on the mound, like, "Do I really need to do this?"

And then the Cubs' Ron Santo ran out of the dugout and beat the crap out of that pitcher. It was almost like, "Well, Banks may not come after you, but I will."

In light of how much players make nowadays, it's refreshing to think about such a tremendous optimist as Banks. We're talking about a guy I don't think ever made more than \$60,000 a year. When I became a parent, I realized how important these people are as role models. I mean, I looked up to ballplayers, and I wonder what I would have thought if in my youth the



There's a mysterious bond between the Cubs and their fans, and for me, that's enough. Winning it all would be the icing on the cake, but certainly it's not the cake.

sports heroes I looked up to turned out be involved in drugs and this and that. It was a little different back then, and I guess I'm glad it was.

But I'm a firm believer in not getting caught up in nostalgia. There always are optimistic players at different times—I mean, Pete Rose had a great enthusiasm for the game—and there are different types of enthusiasm, different ways of showing it. I suppose every team has its own spark plug, but Banks stands out for me because I was a kid and he was with the Cubs. I'm sure if you talk to any kid, you name the team, and he'll point out the guy. I just don't know enough nowadays because everything's changed.

I'm in my mid-40s, and I grew up with the belief that when you follow a team, those are the guys that you follow for the next 10 years. Unless someone was killed or, heaven forbid, traded, there was a continuity there. You knew who all the players were; every year the same players came back, and you could form a real

identification with the team. That's pretty difficult today. I can't keep up with the game because teams change faces every year. There's a whole different way of following a team now: You're not necessarily following the faces or the players—you're following the uniforms. And that's all right, because if you don't know the difference it's OK. You know what I mean? You got to go with what's happening.

I'm a peripheral baseball junkie now, and as an actor that's how I'm able to satisfy it. The whole basis of my 1977 play, "Bleacher Bums," is, what exactly causes 35,000 people to come out to the ballfield and root? Sitting in a section of the bleachers and writing the play is probably the closest I'll get to being involved in major league baseball. In the play you have people from all walks of life—everyone from bums to rich guys—attending the

game, sitting together, and following this team that has been basically mediocre for the last 50 years. Obviously it's a greater thing than winning or losing. It must transcend that. It must be something else.

I'm sure some people in Cleveland would argue with me, but the Cubs more than any other team exemplify that mysterious bond. They haven't delivered a world championship in more than 85 years now, but the fans are still rabid. The Cubs will take the fans close to the wire, like they did in '84, '89—even '69—but they never seem to cross it. Yet, come Opening Day the next year, everybody's there. There's something special about that, and what I'm saying is, that's enough for me. That's the most important thing. Winning it all would be the icing on the cake, but certainly it's not the cake. ■

When he can tear himself away from the ballpark, JOE MANTEGNA is a highly respected actor. Watch for him in "Looking for Bobby Fischer" this fall.

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